FALL BOOKS 2017

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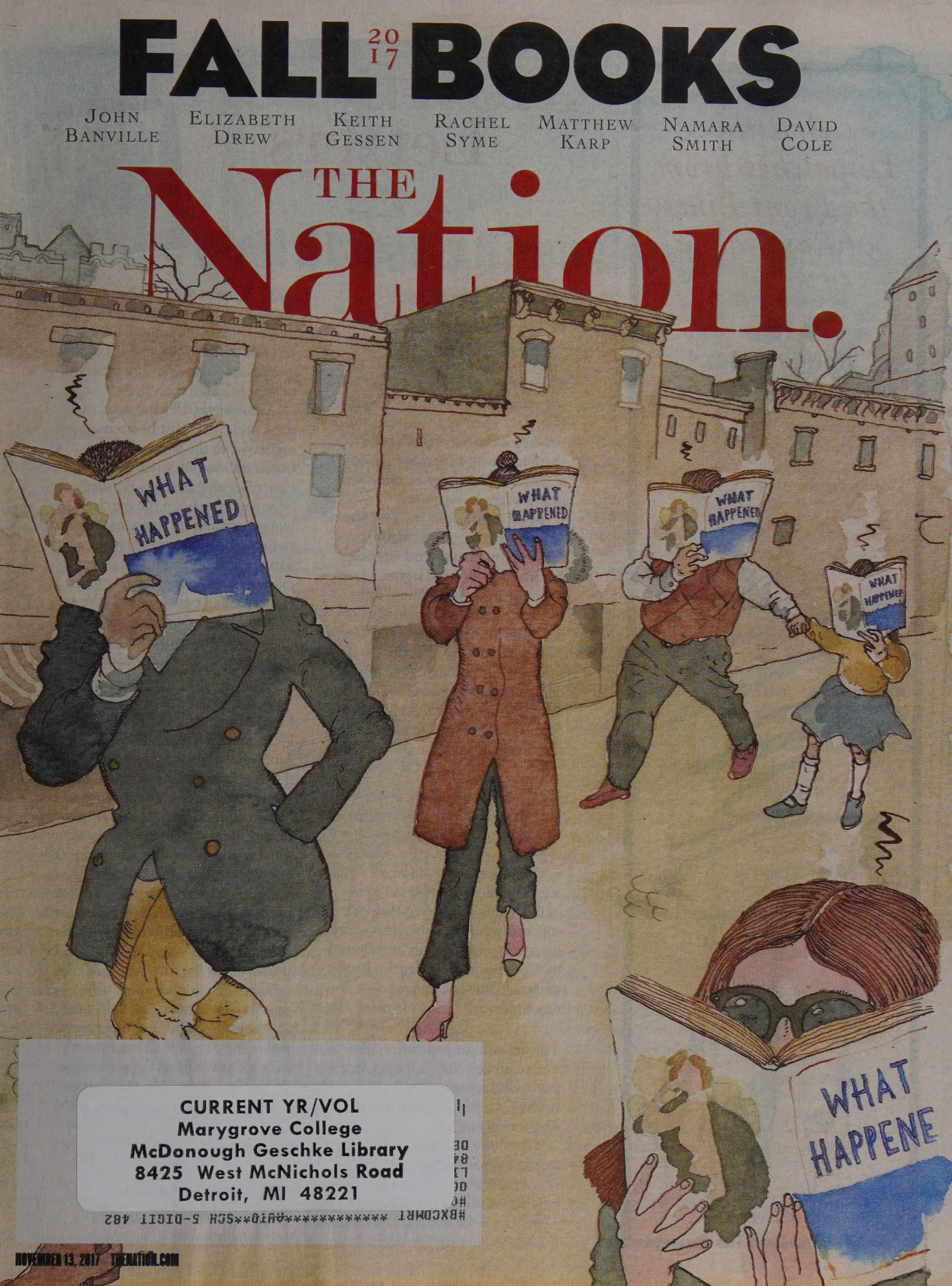

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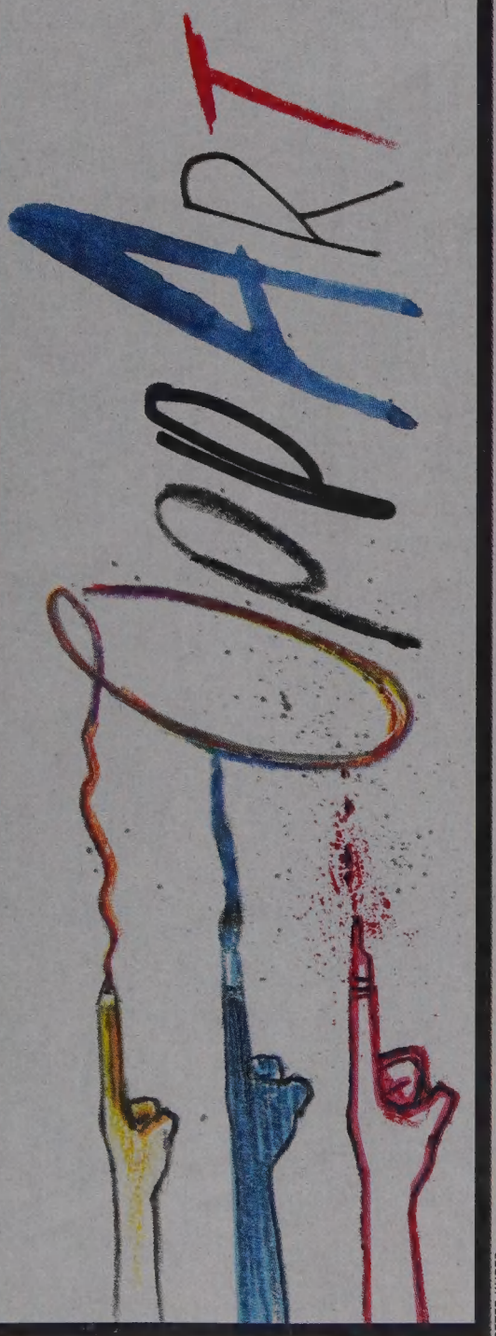

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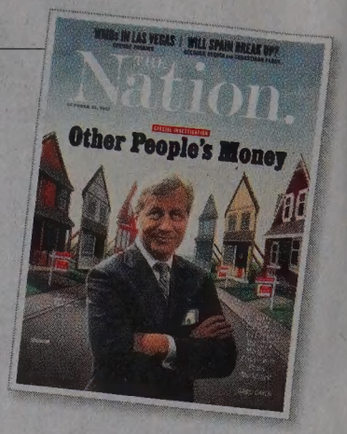

Letters

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Fighting Gunfire With...?

The billion-dollar gun industry and its lobbyists, including the NRA, have intentionally and strategically weaponized the US Constitution ["WMDs in Las Vegas," Oct. 23]. They appropriated and perverted the Second Amendment, shaping it into a marketing tool in order to flood the country with military-grade weaponry.

They've gone too far. The Second Amendment is now infringing upon and undermining our other constitutionally guaranteed rights, among them the First Amendment right to peaceable assembly and the 14th Amendment rights to life and liberty.

The slaughter of US citizens is not the price of freedom; it's the price of unregulated corporate greed and political corruption. It is the ultimate loss of freedom. We need to take our Constitution back from the gun industry.

CARA MARIANNA

We shouldn't be talking about banning the sale of assault weapons; we should be talking about making the ownership of these lethal devices *illegal*. More than a million are already out there. Some are bound to be in the hands of Stephen Paddock copycats waiting to slaughter more innocents, and this will be followed by more vigils, condolences, hand-wringing, flowers, and candles. Too much already!

HORACE HONE
WEST PALM BEACH, FLA.

The Second Amendment states: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

Obviously, the need for a state militia has been replaced by the National Guard and Coast Guard. So the only two reasons for a citizen to own a firearm are for hunting or defense of the household from intruders. In both cases, the ownership of a handgun, shotgun, or rifle is more than adequate to satisfy these purposes. There is absolutely no need for any US civilian to own any weapon more powerful or sophisticated than these.

Accordingly, all handguns, shotguns, and rifles must be licensed and registered to the degree necessary to match the weapon to its owner at the click of a computer key. Furthermore, if we had prohibited the purchase of more sophisticated weapons, innocent victims would not have died or been harmed at shopping malls, college campuses, congressional meetings, churches, and now concerts. We as a country must deal with this issue immediately lest our society fall back to the days when everyone carried a holstered gun.

JOE BIALEK
CLEVELAND

One of the most important yet overlooked factors in gun violence in America is the very existence of the detachable magazine or "clip" used in semiautomatic firearms, not merely its size. The likelihood that Americans will give up their firearms is remote in the extreme, in spite of the tragedies in Las Vegas, Orlando, etc. It seems to me that we need a different approach, one that comports with the Second Amendment yet diminishes the threat posed by firearms. I propose that firearms not have clips.

In military use, an assault rifle is capable of automatic as well as semiautomatic fire. The latter requires one pull of the trigger to fire one round; fully automatic fire is the continuous firing of one round after another as long as the trigger remains depressed and until the magazine is empty (or the weapon jams, etc.). Additionally, the conversion of almost any semiautomatic weapon to one capable of

Comments drawn from our website
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(continued on page 12)

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Wall Street's Siren Song

The Wall Street wing of the Democratic Party will always be with us. Its policies—on trade, financial deregulation, fiscal austerity, mass incarceration, and military intervention—have been ruinous. Its political aversion to populist appeals has been self-defeating. But Wall Street has the money, so it will always enjoy upholstered think tanks, perches on the op-ed pages of major newspapers, and gaggles of politicians eager to peddle its proposals.

As the Democratic Party finds itself in the wilderness, the Wall Streeters are trying to argue that they have a way out. Will Marshall, co-founder of the Democratic Leadership Council and rabid advocate of the Iraq War and the debacle in Libya, has announced another venture, New Democracy, to develop "really big ideas" for the Democrats. Third Way, which championed disastrous trade accords and cutting the social safety net, is now touting a $20 million program to discover how to talk to working people without alienating Wall Street. And Douglas Schoen, a pollster and partner in a corporate public-relations firm who also plays a Democrat on Fox News, recently offered a *New York Times* op-ed explaining "Why Democrats Need Wall Street."

Schoen blamed populism for the catastrophic losses that the Democrats suffered at the state and national levels during the Obama years, and he attributed Hillary Clinton's 2016 defeat to a "lurch to the left" that exists only in his imagination. For Schoen, the model president is Bill Clinton, and he hailed "two key economic legislative victories" achieved by the Clinton administration: the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the Financial Services Modernization Act of 1999. The former opened the door for the speculative boom and bust in telecommunications that wasted trillions of dollars and left consumers with higher prices. The latter repealed the Glass-Steagall Act and was central to the financial deregulation that led directly to the Great Recession. Schoen ended his column with a pitch for more financial deregulation that surely serves his corporate clients, if not Democratic prospects.

Schoen is another Wall Street–backed minstrel whose transparent silliness comes from self-enforced blindness. He and his ideological allies can't own up to the devastating effects of centrist policies over the past decades. Inequality is now an obstacle to growth. Staggering trade deficits ravage entire communities. Austerity and deregulation have left millions of Americans struggling to stay afloat. Big money perverts our democracy.

Nor are Schoen's arguments borne out by recent political developments. Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders is the most popular politician in the country because he is free to tell Americans how they're getting screwed, who rigged the rules, and what should be done to change course. Trump's improbable victory derived in part from his populist critique of the failed "establishment," which he supercharged with racist appeals. Despite hand-wringing from Wall Street, one-third of Senate Democrats have endorsed Sanders's Medicare for All legislation, including possible presidential hopefuls like Kamala Harris, Elizabeth Warren, and Cory Booker.

Schoen did offer one serious argument as to why the Democrats need Wall Street, what he called "an ugly fact of politics: money." Maintaining ties to Wall Street "keeps [the party's] coffers full," he noted. That's why some of the Democrats' most visible potential candidates for the presidency—Schoen named Harris, Booker, Kirsten Gillibrand, and Deval Patrick—will always have ties to Wall Street.

Can populist candidates raise enough money to compete in America's billion-dollar presidential races and million-dollar House and Senate races? Even though he started late, Sanders raised $230 million, mostly in small donations. Warren, the scourge of Wall Street, has been notably successful in funding her campaigns. Sherrod Brown, who pioneered populist campaigning in Ohio, has managed to remain

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Cover illustration by Barry Blitt.

financially competitive. In the most expensive House race in 2016, progressive Jamie Raskin defeated two multimillionaire opponents. Populist candidates will seldom be able to equal the funds deployed by Wall Street–backed candidates or by self-funding billionaires. But if the populist temper of the time continues to build, more and more candidates will be in the position to combine small donations and the energy of activists and volunteers to mount competitive races.

There is no good alternative. The bankruptcy of the establishment is clear to all. Unable and unwilling to take on entrenched interests, the corporate Democrats have no answers for the challenges that now confront the country. Attractive candidates like Barack Obama may be able to win elections and make some progress—and they surely won't do as much damage as Donald Trump. But necessary and fundamental reform will happen only if the populist movement in the United States grows powerful enough to force that change. ROBERT L. BOROSAGE

DC BY THE NUMBERS

50

Average daily number of workers nationwide who are sexually assaulted on the job, according to the Department of Justice

80%

Proportion of women farmworkers in California's Central Valley who experienced sexual harassment on the job, according to a 2010 survey

14,900

Estimated number of sexual assaults in the military in 2016, according to the Pentagon; only 6,172 of these assaults were reported

—Glyn Peterson

"Then there were threats [that] if I continued with the case, I would be deported."

Maricruz Ladino, a farmworker in Salinas, California, after she filed a sexual-assault complaint against her supervisor

Department of Drilling

A leaked plan predicts the plunder of our public lands.

In the next five years, millions of acres of America's public lands and waters—including some national monuments and relatively pristine coastal regions—could be auctioned off for oil and gas development, with little thought to the environmental consequences. That's according to a leaked draft, obtained by *The Nation*, of the Department of the Interior's strategic vision, which states that the DOI is committed to achieving "American energy dominance" through the exploitation of "vast amounts" of untapped energy reserves on public lands. Alarmingly, the 50-page policy blueprint doesn't once mention climate science or climate change. This is a clear departure from current policy: The previous plan, covering 2014–2018, referred to climate change 46 times and explicitly stated that the DOI was committed to improving resilience in those communities most directly affected by global warming.

The Department of the Interior's new strategic plan fits within a broader effort by the Trump administration to marginalize climate-science research. Last week, the Environmental Protection Agency abruptly withdrew two of its scientists and a contractor from a conference in Rhode Island, where they were due to address the impacts of climate change on coastal waters. EPA websites have also been scrubbed of most references to climate change. At the DOI and the Department of Energy, scientists have been discouraged from referring to climate change in grant proposals and press releases. Earlier this month, Joel Clement—a top policy adviser and climate scientist at the DOI—resigned after being transferred to an accounting position, where he was assigned to collect royalties from the oil and gas industry. Clement, who had spoken out about the impacts of climate change on Native American communities in Alaska, alleges that his reassignment was politically motivated.

Understanding the threat of climate change had been an integral part of the DOI's mission, said Elizabeth Klein, who served as associate deputy secretary there from 2012 to 2017 and was involved in drafting the earlier strategic plan. That document sought to address a number of the risks associated with climate change, including drought, sea-level rise, and severe flooding. One section referred specifically to the need for more research on erosion along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts, which are particularly vulnerable to hurricanes. To completely ignore climate risks, Klein said, is an abdication of the department's responsibility as a manager and steward of the nation's public lands. "It's yet another example of an unfortunate regression," she said.

COMMENT

While disregarding climate change, the DOI's 2018–2022 strategic plan places a premium on facilitating oil and gas development. It calls for speeding up the processing of land parcels nominated for oil and gas leasing; establishes an executive committee for expedited permitting to facilitate on- and offshore leasing; and aims to reduce by half the amount of time it takes to green-light energy projects on Native land. The department is also seeking to speed up the application process for drilling permits, even though the industry is currently sitting on thousands of approved permits. "It is bewildering that the agency would prioritize approving more permits—at the inevitable expense of your environmental responsibilities—when companies have plenty and appear to be simply stockpiling them," wrote Representative Raúl Grijalva, ranking member of the House Natural Resources Committee, in an April letter to the acting director of the Bureau of Land Management.

Not surprisingly, one of the DOI's key performance indicators for the next five years will be the number of acres of public lands made available for oil and natural-gas leasing. The department's role in promoting renewable-energy development largely goes unmentioned. The new plan also has little to say about conservation, a word mentioned 74 times in the previous strategy blueprint and only 25 times in the new version. Instead of the protection of landscapes and ecosystems, the new report emphasizes the DOI's role in policing the US-Mexico border. The department manages nearly half of the southern border region, the report notes, as well as the third-largest number of law-enforcement officers in the executive branch, and it intends to deploy them "to decrease illegal immigration and marijuana smuggling on DOI managed public lands."

In his resignation letter, Clement pointed to the fact that Americans are increasingly confronting the realities of climate change in their daily lives, whether it's families fleeing the devastation of a hurricane, businesses in coastal communities being forced to relocate because of rising sea levels and coastal erosion, or farmers grappling with "floods of biblical proportions." "If the Trump administration continues to try to silence experts in science, health and other fields," Clement warned, "many more Americans, and the natural ecosystems upon which they depend, will be put at risk." ADAM FEDERMAN

Adam Federman is a reporting fellow with the Investigative Fund at the Nation Institute.

Asking for a Friend

Liza Featherstone

Bad Education

Dear Liza,

My almost 4-year-old son has yet to attend any kind of school, but I'm starting to think about his education. I believe it's a civic duty to support public education in every way, including by sending one's own kids to public school. The problem is, I'm anti-school, especially for young children. Almost all of them—public and private—are developmentally inappropriate for children under the age of 8 or 9. From the lack of play to the hyper-focus on academics, I don't think school is good for them. I'm considering homeschooling my kid until second or third grade. We'd mostly "unschool" (obnoxious, I know), which for us would mean making the city our oyster, learning through experiences and adventures. My question is: Am I contributing to the demise of public education by doing this? Am I leveraging my privilege (to work less and homeschool) at the expense of others? ***—Parent or Citizen?***

Dear Parent or Citizen?,

I sympathize with this conundrum, and you articulate it well. But don't assume it will go away as your child gets older. Middle school is probably even less developmentally appropriate for 11-year-olds than kindergarten is for 4-year-olds. I agree, however, that it's important for privileged parents to bring their social and political capital into the public-school system; just look at the difference between school systems where this happens and those where it doesn't. New York City, where it's more common for well-off parents to send their kids to public school, has many excellent ones, while Baltimore and Philadelphia, where this is less usual, have very few. This becomes a vicious cycle, because what parent would choose to send their kids to a terrible school?

One way to resolve this, Parent, if you live in a city with a choice system, is to look for a diverse public school with a more progressive, project-based curriculum that incorporates play into the day and doesn't insist on early academic achievement. (Full disclosure: I did this, and am very glad that I did.) Visit the kindergartens; if you see Legos or water tables, stop worrying so much. Of course, not every district has such schools. But even if you're looking at more conventional public schools, I'd suggest broadening your thinking about what is "developmentally appropriate." Socializing, unmediated by parents, indisputably benefits young children. Additionally, being away from you during some part of the day encourages a healthy independence. Privileged children also gain from attending diverse public schools. Extensive literature shows that kids who go to a school with people who are different from them have more social intelligence than those who don't. It seems unlikely that a child who didn't enter public school until third grade could reap these benefits as much as a child who had entered in kindergarten, given how crucial these early years are in shaping the way we make sense of the world. Lastly, while there are plenty of state-sponsored education policies that are cruel (standardized testing, for instance), many teachers have knowledge about kids that we, as parents not trained in early-childhood education, lack. In other words, the dilemma—what's good for society versus what's good for your child—may not be as stark as you think. Give public school a try.

Questions? Ask Liza at TheNation.com/article/asking-for-a-friend.

Dear Liza,

I've recently realized that there are certain topics that bring out a lot of anxiety in me. When I'm in a context where people don't share my concerns or viewpoints, I start to talk in a sterner voice, I lose my usual humor, and I don't ask good questions to learn more about other people's opinions. My friends, with whom I feel really safe, don't ever see me acting this way. In contexts that are less "loving," I struggle to be my charming self. I feel upset about injustice but worried that I'll say it all wrong—and then I do. I'm wondering what role anxiety plays in activists' lives and how we can be more resilient.

—Anxious Activist

(continued on page 8)

ILLUSTRATED BY **JOANNA NEBORSKY**

AMAZON

Supplicant Cities

Amazon's search for a second headquarters has set off a bidding war among more than 200 cities and states across North America. Here are some of the more shameless proposals:

New Jersey promised Amazon more than $7 billion in tax breaks if it placed its headquarters in Newark—enough to run the city's school system for almost eight years.

Missouri offered Amazon three of its five biggest cities—St. Louis, Columbia, and Kansas City—and pledged to construct an Elon Musk–style Hyperloop train to connect them.

Birmingham, Alabama, sought to woo the company by putting up three gigantic Amazon boxes around the city and encouraging residents to take selfies with them.

Tucson, Arizona, tried to uproot a 21-foot saguaro cactus and ship it to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos. Amazon rejected the succulent on the grounds that it can't accept gifts—only, apparently, bribes in the form of tax breaks.

Stonecrest, Georgia, offered to create a new municipality and name it Amazon, Georgia, while making Bezos its mayor for life. (Not to be outdone, the Canadian city of Calgary offered to change its name to "Calmazon" if selected.) —Jake Bittle

Eric Alterman

Hungry and Invisible

Forty-one million Americans are food insecure. Why are the media ignoring them?

Every year for the past two decades, the US Department of Agriculture has released a report on hunger and food insecurity in the United States. You may have read about these in the past. Prior reports have all received coverage, particularly when the news was positive and people could feel good about the progress we were making in feeding folks in need.

But this year's report—released on September 6 and filled with worrisome trends—has been met with silence. I have not been able to find a single mention of it in the mainstream media: not one national television news program, major newspaper, or national radio show. NPR and the Associated Press have always reported on it in the past, according to Joel Berg, the CEO of Hunger Free America, but both ignored it this year.

This omission is partly a product of our current news overload, the result of having a psychopath president with a genius for generating headlines. Media organizations have invested heavily in covering Trump's antics, and there is only so much money and space available for everything else, especially the kind of news that does not bring in advertising (unlike, say, celebrity gossip or sports). But Trump's circus-barker talents serve not only his intended purpose—to keep the attention of the world on his buffoonish behavior—but to steer our eyes away from how he and his minions are undermining virtually everything worthwhile about the US government. Trump overwhelms the news, helping his own class of robber-baron cronies as they quietly rape the earth, pollute our shared natural resources, and seek to destroy what remains of our personal freedoms and democratic norms. And if you take a look at what's going on in the Department of the Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy, the Department of Education, and nearly anywhere else in the executive branch, you can see the success of this system.

The news on hunger is bad, but it's all the more shocking when you consider that, during the most recent year covered in the USDA report, the Dow Jones industrial average rose by 13 percent, and the collective net worth of the 400 wealthiest Americans, according to *Forbes*, increased to $2.4 trillion. At the same time, the number of Americans classified as "food insecure" remained 5 million higher than in 2007, before the recession. That number—41 million Americans—is larger than the combined populations of Texas, Michigan, and Maine. Candidate Barack Obama pledged to end child hunger in the United States back in 2008. But that went about as well as the plan to close Gitmo. After Obama's two terms, we still have nearly 13 million food-insecure children.

Family food insecurity in rural America (15 percent) exceeds that in cities (14.2 percent) and the suburbs (9.5 percent). Trump supporters who believed his crap about the hellish conditions of America's "inner cities" will be disproportionately harmed should the Republican Congress succeed in enacting its proposed cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The allegations of massive fraud in the food-stamp program have been a hobbyhorse for Republicans for as long as SNAP has existed. Naturally, Trump lied during the campaign about the number of Americans covered by the program as well as its potential for abuse. He argued that the number had been rising during Obama's presidency when, in fact, it had declined over most of Obama's second term. Trump's budget calls for a roughly 25 percent, or $191 billion, cut in the program over the next decade. For Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Mick Mulvaney, the White House's Office of Management and Budget director, the reduction in food assistance is a convenient way to open the door for tax giveaways to their multimillionaire and billionaire overlords. But Trump's own secretary of agriculture, Sonny Perdue, disagrees. Referring to SNAP, he said recently, "You don't try to fix things that aren't broken."

The media have invested heavily in covering Trump's antics, and there is only so much money and space available for everything else.

Since this is a right-wing Republican defending a government program for poor people, one could be forgiven for assuming that it must be remarkably effective—which, in fact, it is. Peer-reviewed

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Coverage of the proposed SNAP cuts suffers from the same "both sides" syndrome that infects most of what we see, read, or hear in the media.

studies have repeatedly found that SNAP reduces food insecurity in the United States by approximately 13 percent. What's more, it has been found to reduce obesity and improve baby weight. According to a 2016 paper published in *The American Economic Review*, "access to food stamps in utero and in early childhood leads to significant reductions in metabolic syndrome conditions (obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes) in adulthood."

SNAP is also among the most important programs helping to lift people out of poverty; currently, only the earned-income tax credit can be said to do more. This is good for the health of the overall economy and not just for the individuals who get the benefit, as the recipients contribute more in taxes over time.

Coverage of the proposed SNAP cuts suffers from the same "both sides" syndrome that infects most of what we see, read, or hear in the media. *The Washington Post* featured a debate between Northwestern University economics professor Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, who earned a PhD in the field from Princeton, and noneconomist, non-PhD in anything, and professor at nowhere Robert E. Rector, a "senior research fellow" at the anti-intellectual Heritage Foundation. Schanzenbach offered specifics and statistics, while Rector spouted unsupported assertions mixed with outright falsehoods. (He has expounded similarly on topics ranging from immigration "amnesty" to race and IQ and even abstinence education—always without demonstrating any expertise beyond the ability to appeal to whatever ignorant right-wing ideologues wish to believe.) Yet nowhere did the *Post* identify the participants' qualifications; nor did the paper put much effort into refereeing between the truth and lies that each "expert" presented. Readers starved for guidance as to where the truth lay went away hungry. ■

(continued from page 5)

Dear Anxious,

It sounds as if, in addition to anxiety, your sense of personal responsibility may be getting in the way of having productive discussions. That sounds weird, right? After all, that sense of personal responsibility is part of what inspires us to be politically active in the first place. But it can also be paralyzing. You may be putting too much pressure on each individual conversation. Remember, if these are people in your community, you'll have lots of chances to influence them. Don't try to do it all in one interaction. Think of your perspective as a seed that might be nourished by regular friendly contact. If you feel the discussion is about to go off the rails, bow out gracefully and say something light: "We'll probably be talking about this a lot!"

It's also important to ease up on yourself. There are other forces influencing this person's thinking. Try remembering in the moment that your interlocutor has her own upbringing, her friends, and all of the media shaping her views. Changing her mind may not be a task you can do alone.

I would also advocate getting some training in organizing. Improving your skills would bring you more persuasive success, which would in turn improve your confidence and ease your anxiety. Many labor organizations offer summer schools on organizing, while other groups offer training for people at the grass roots. Your self-awareness is admirable; I'm sure you can improve your game. ■

SNAPSHOT / BAZ RATNER

Driven to Tears

A Kenyan lawmaker gasps for breath after police fired tear gas at a convoy of opposition politicians in Nairobi on October 13. Kenya is set to hold a revote after the courts annulled the country's presidential election this past August.

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CRIMINAL INJUSTICE

Getting a Fare Shake

Activists and advocates for criminal-justice reform have set their sights on an overlooked source of arrests: fare evasion. In major cities across the country, jumped turnstiles and skipped bus fares result in thousands of misdemeanor arrests. And, as is so often the case in our criminal-justice system, there's a glaring racial disparity at work. A 2016 study by researchers at Portland State University found that black transit riders were much more likely than other groups to be banned from the city's TriMet system.

This is also the case, though even more aggressively, in New York City, where 90 percent of those arrested by police for fare evasion in the first quarter of 2017 were black and Hispanic men. The ramifications of these arrests extend beyond the steep

fines and misdemeanor charges most associated with so-called broken-windows policing. In some metro areas, including Portland and Atlanta, those charged with fare evasion are also suspended from using transit services for up to 90 days, often inhibiting their ability to go to school, work, or even the grocery store. It's worth asking whether justice is really being served by imposing such harsh consequences over $2 and change.

—Elizabeth Adetiba

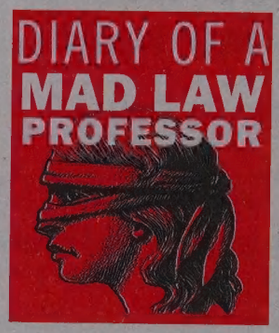
Patricia J. Williams

The Red King Rules

Questionable playacting is no longer just for Halloween.

It is a tribute to the strange unreality of our time that among the children's Halloween outfits being sold online, there was this: an Anne Frank costume. "100% POLYESTER," read the product description. "Easy to put on and take off. Visits to the toilet made easy thanks to Velcro fastening."

"All the kids love it," another blurb promised. "This outfit can be worn for many different occasions such as World War times, Evacuee times and also as a street urchin." Happily, the pushback was immediate, strong, and condemnatory enough that the costume's name was changed. It is now being sold as a "World War II Evacuee… Fancy Dress Costume [for] Girls."



The thought of children dressing "up" as Anne Frank to trick-or-treat as part of the Christian celebration of All Hallows Eve is surely bizarre enough. Yet I suppose it isn't any more shocking than the proliferation of dead-Trayvon-Martin costumes that proliferated a few years back, or the recurring phenomenon of fraternity blackface parties, or the odd use of tiki torches to symbolize the white-hot flames of neo-Nazi power. To be fair, some of these masquerades are concocted for supposedly educational purposes, such as a Georgia middle school's Civil War Dress-Up Day (guess who gets to be a plantation owner, who a slave), or the recent documentary on Britain's Channel 4, *My Week as a Muslim*, in which a "frightened" white woman dons a hijab and brown makeup in order to "experience" racism and discover "why they live like that."

There is a fiercely reiterated colonialism in these little morality plays, something habitual about this leaping out of our lives to become someone else. I wonder, too, if there isn't a peculiar kind of trauma hiding in plain sight in these reenactments, this desire to "pass" as something we are not, to blend in even as we perform otherness, whether exoticizing or demonizing. It is curious the degree to which we so easily assume we can walk in the moccasins of another by literally buying the shirt off the back of that other (as well as those absolutely darling hand-stitched moccasins). I don't wish to rain on anyone's parade; I believe that the rituals of role reversal can serve important psychic and cultural functions. But when we have no consciousness of the narratives we are performing, then I worry that it becomes indistinguishable from living a lie.

I am not alone in worrying about the prevalence of public lying right now. Dissembling is so widespread that we seem ensnared by the proleptic expectation that nothing is ever as it seems. Consider the irresistibly surreal assertions of one Joe Vargas, a manufacturer of hemp syrup. In a tweet that went viral, he maintained that Melania Trump—as seen in a photo taken of the first couple touring a Secret Service training center in Maryland—was not really Melania Trump. The Twitterverse went wild, applying biometrics to measure her height, her nose, the jib of her jaw. Some even pointed to what appeared to be split ends on the alleged body double's alleged wig: The real Melania would never have split ends! (If only that laser scope of surveillance were applied to the rest of our political world.)

Perhaps it was the very assertion that there is such a thing as hemp syrup that beguiled us down the fairy-tale path toward the lure of impersonation. I found myself yearning for the big reveal: SYRUP SALESMAN UNCOVERS BODY-SNATCHING ALIENS INHABITING THE WHITE HOUSE. It would explain so much.

I wonder if there isn't a peculiar kind of trauma hiding in plain sight in this desire to "pass" as something we are not.

As we approach the one-year mark of the Trump presidency, I cannot shake the sense that we have well and truly entered Lewis Carroll's alternative universe on the other side of the looking glass. With every 3 AM tweet that may or may not be entered into the National Archives, it feels as though we are conversing about a United States that exists only as a figment of the Red King's dreams. As Tweedledum explained it to Alice with such eloquence: "If that there King was to wake, you'd go out—bang!—like a candle!"

Even as I write, the news is heavy with mourning and confusion, vengeance and ventriloquism; nothing is what it purports to be. Facebook and Twitter are said to have provided a platform for the Russian government to create an unholy host of "fake

TOP RIGHT: ANDY FRIEDMAN

Americans" whose viral messaging, it was hoped, would influence our elections. According to *The New York Times*, the "phony promoters" of one of those sites, *DCLeaks*, "were in the vanguard of a cyberarmy of counterfeit Facebook and Twitter accounts, a legion of Russian-controlled impostors whose operations are still being unraveled."

Phoniness defines us now; all is smoke and mirrors and very bad magic. For proof, we have only to consider the stream of nonsense, misrepresentation, and outright lies that issues daily from the president of the United States: Prior presidents never called the relatives of dead service members. The Chinese created the concept of global warming. Barack Obama's birth certificate is a forgery. Inoculation causes autism. No one has done more for people with disabilities than Donald Trump. No one has more respect for women than Donald Trump.

And the moon is made of hemp syrup.

I believe that we are experiencing a concerted and intentional assault upon our collective memory. If "Never again" was the phrase that until recently conveyed our refusal to forget the horrors of the Holocaust, we have now entered an age guided by a new imperative: "Never remember." Beneath the weight of such corruption, someone passing as Melania Trump (bewigged with split ends or not) frankly seems less peculiar than her husband's dressing up as president. And as for Anne Frank? Her memory has been diminished to a "blue dress with peter pan collar. Brown saddle bag and green beret complete the look. Ideal for indoor events."

Tweedledee put it best: "Contrariwise, if it was so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic." ■

"Never again" once conveyed our refusal to forget the Holocaust, but we have entered an age guided by a new imperative: "Never remember."

SECURITY STATE

Tortured Logic

In his new book, *In the Shadows of the American Century: The Rise and Decline of US Global Power,* Alfred McCoy argues that the use of torture by dying empires is "both a manifestation of and a causal factor for imperial decline." A half-century from now, McCoy predicts, historians will view the Abu Ghraib scandal as "emblematic" of the end of America's global hegemony. For decades, the US government has wormed its way around the definition of "torture" by means of elaborate (and bipartisan) legal wrangling. When the Senate finally ratified the UN Convention Against Torture in 1994, it came, McCoy notes, with "four little noticed diplomatic 'reservations'" by President Bill Clinton that "focused on just one word in the treaty's twenty-six printed pages: 'mental.'" Clinton "narrowed the definition of mental torture" in order to permit "the very techniques the CIA had developed and propagated for the previous forty years," thereby creating the legal framework for waterboarding at the CIA's black sites long before the Bush administration's infamous torture memos. —Gunar Olsen

OPPART / DAVID LEVINE

Like a Baby

When Senator Bob Corker (R-TN) opined that the White House was an "adult day care center," he wasn't the first to note the president's infantile qualities. Renowned caricaturist David Levine, who died in 2009, recognized them as early as this 1988 illustration.

Calvin Trillin | Deadline Poet

THE GENERAL SPEAKS

"Video Disproves Story Kelly Told About Lawmaker"
—*The New York Times*

At first, he spoke with feeling and made sense.
Then, suddenly, toward lies and slurs he lurched.
He gave us an example of the rule:
Whoever's close to Trump will get besmirched.

The Nation.

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Letters

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(continued from page 2)

automatic fire is fairly simple, if illegal, and in most cases the instructions can be found online.

So is the solution to ban assault rifles or other weapons capable of conversion from semiautomatic to automatic fire? No, because that's not going to happen. Rather, we should ban detachable magazines or clips, regardless of their capacity.

Semiautomatic weapons without clips are available, but they are loaded much more slowly than by simply inserting a preloaded clip. They require loading an internal magazine one round at a time with maybe five to six rounds—more than enough for any hunter's requirements.

By outlawing all detachable clips as well as the conversion of any firearm to accommodate a detachable clip, we get to the heart of what makes these "weapons of war."

Stuart Kaplan
Chapel Hill, N.C.

When are we going to address the accelerating social and emotional fears related to the increasing number of mass shootings in our country? I, for one, am getting sick and tired of feeling threatened and asking if it's wise to go to a movie, concert, or any other gathering, for that matter.

I would like to suggest a slight change to the phrase "Guns don't kill, people do": "Guns don't kill people, *bullets* do." With this reasoning in mind, it wouldn't matter how many guns or what types of guns an individual owns, so long as the number of bullets is limited to, say, six—not per gun, mind you, but per individual (and zero for assault weapons). Similar to prescription-drug refills, "refills" for bullets would be honored, in 90-day intervals, by the number of spent shell casings returned. After all, how many bullets are needed to kill a deer? And with respect to home invasions, if an individual has more than six events within 90 days, I think we really need to take a closer look at that individual.

I have heard similar solutions proposed before, but unfortunately policy is often made by the highest bidder. If we continue to condone this, I'm afraid the next mass shooter will scale the present bar. This is something that we as a people cannot accept!

Howard Schweitzer
Lake Worth, Fla.

Debating Violence, Peacefully

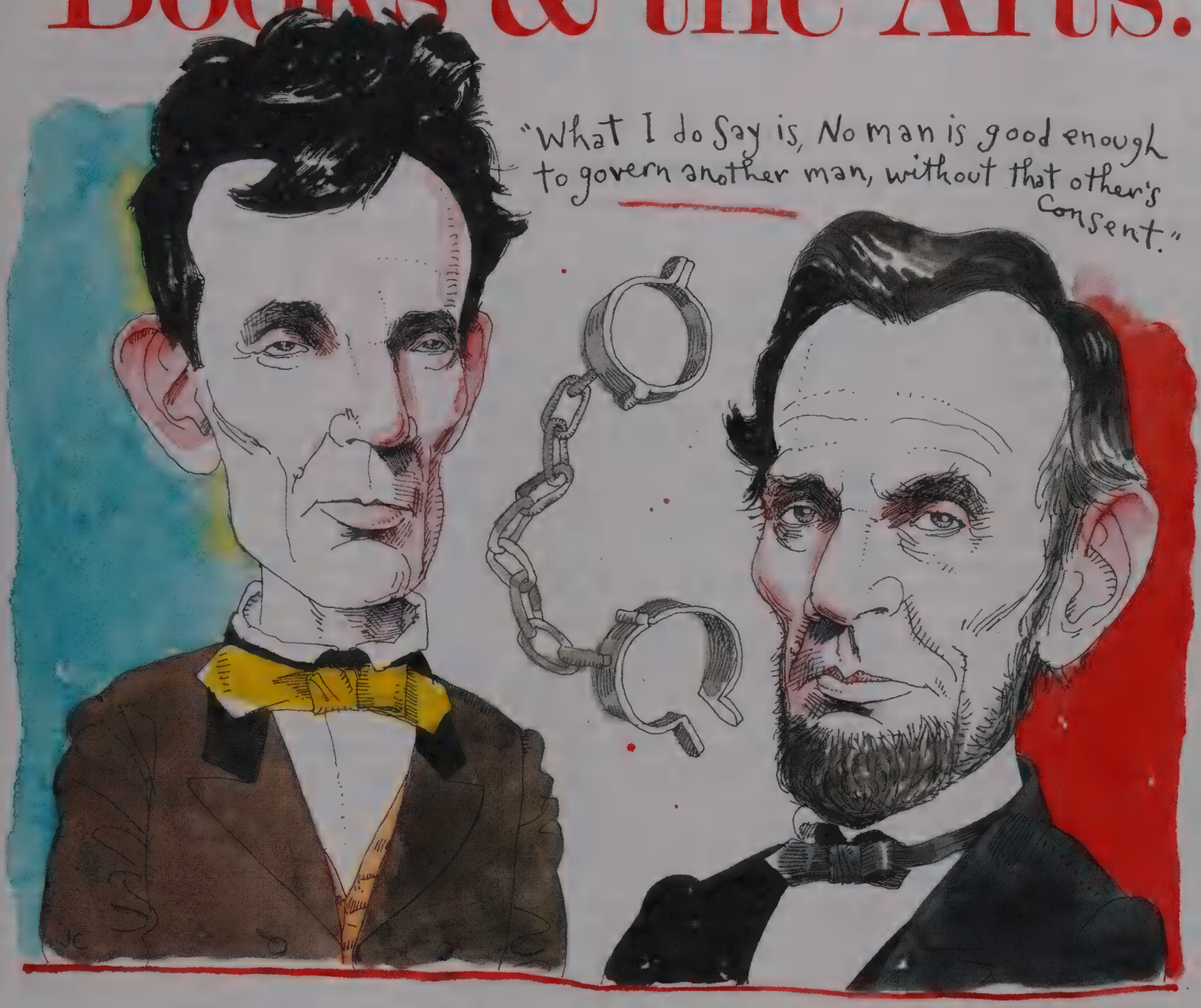
Using violence to confront violence causes fear among the undecided, who then choose "law and order" ["When Violence Comes," Oct. 23]. Nonviolence doesn't always succeed, but violence rarely does. We fought a bloody Civil War but still haven't resolved our racist tendencies. Love, empathy, and respect are hard work and take time.

Timothy Bardell

This is wonderful advice for public demonstrations in blue cities, where 500 leftists are available for nonviolent response—not so much for those of us who live and work in red states, surrounded by armed extremists just waiting for the slightest excuse to gun us down in "self defense." And yes, they are the same ones who run and work in the sheriff's department and the court system. No protection for us there. Attempts to protect ourselves "peacefully" or even roll over in surrender only invite scorn and worse violence.

I don't have a gun and never will. But I will *not* go down without fighting. Lisa Aug

Books & the Arts.



THE GREAT UNCOMPROMISER

Lincoln fought to remake the center—not yield to it

by MATTHEW KARP

The life of Abraham Lincoln abounds with dramatic contradiction. Born into a Kentucky poverty as obscure as it was desperate, Lincoln died a global icon, mourned by emperors from Brazil to Turkey, and later cherished as an inspiration by Japanese sugar workers in Hawaii and anticolonial activists in Ghana.

Haunted all his life by a lack of education—as a middle-aged state legislator, he still spelled the word "very" with two R's—Lincoln is now routinely celebrated as our most literary president, a terse and natural poet of American aspiration.

With a life marked by personal tragedy—he lost his mother at age 9, his only sister at 19, his fiancée at 26, and two children in midlife—Lincoln was prone to intense bouts of depression. Nevertheless, he held fast to what can only be called a profoundly optimistic political philosophy, defined by a deep trust in the unity of moral and material progress and a sanguine belief that the "central idea" of American life was the "equality of all men." Devoting the great bulk of his career to dusty rural courtrooms and quotidian provincial politics, Lincoln ultimately led the country's greatest political revolution, and soon after its greatest social revolution, too—the bloody transformation of 4 million Americans from property into people.

In this essential dramatic sense, the life of Lincoln is a biographer's dream. WorldCat, an online catalog of global

Matthew Karp is an assistant professor of history at Princeton University and the author of This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy.

ILLUSTRATION BY **JOE CIARDIELLO**

library holdings, lists nearly 24,000 books on Lincoln, more than the numbers for George Washington and Adolf Hitler combined. But his life also presents a formidable challenge: how to square Lincoln's real and appealing ordinariness—"one rais'd through the commonest average of life," as Walt Whitman put it—with his utterly extraordinary career. For his first 45 years, Lincoln cut many figures: dirt-poor farm boy in Indiana, hackish Whig politico in Springfield, prosperous railroad lawyer riding the Illinois circuit. But few of these roles, in a strict sense, had much to do with the colossal drama that tore the union apart and made Lincoln a world-historical symbol of emancipation.

In *A Self-Made Man: 1809–1849* and *Wrestling With His Angel: 1849–1856*—the first two installments of a projected four-volume study on *The Political Life of Abraham Lincoln*—Sidney Blumenthal approaches this dilemma with a winningly old-fashioned strategy. His study of Lincoln is not a pure biography so much as something that 19th-century readers would have understood as a "life and times": a sweeping narrative of antebellum American politics in which our hero only intermittently dominates the action. Where other recent biographers have drilled inward, exploring the social universe of central Illinois or Lincoln's own complex psychology, Blumenthal continually leaps outward, offering a detailed tableau of major events in state and national politics: the nullification crisis of 1832, the annexation of Texas in 1845, the Compromise of 1850. Lincoln's major antagonist in Illinois, the Democratic leader Stephen Douglas, at times receives almost equal billing; a host of additional rivals and allies, from William Seward to Jefferson Davis, are given extended treatments of their own.

This deep context matters to Blumenthal, because his guiding biographical insight is that Lincoln the great statesman and Lincoln the piddling politician were the same man. Blumenthal has no patience for a mythology that puts Honest Abe somehow above and beyond the sordid realm of everyday politics. Lincoln, he writes, "never believed politics corrupted him. He always believed that politics offered the only way to achieve his principles." If we are to understand Lincoln, Blumenthal argues, we must understand the world of antebellum political conflict: messy, rivalrous, jobbing, venal, and yet still an arena where momentous struggles over the American future were fought. "If it were not for Lincoln the politician," Blumenthal explains, "Lincoln the Great Emancipator would never have existed."

A Self-Made Man
The Political Life of Abraham Lincoln 1809–1849
By Sidney Blumenthal
Simon & Schuster. 576 pp. $17

Wrestling With His Angel
The Political Life of Abraham Lincoln 1849–1856
By Sidney Blumenthal
Simon & Schuster. 608 pp. $35

In some ways, of course, this can be read as Blumenthal's self-flattering interpretation of 19th-century America: Few antebellum politicos could match the author's own insider credentials. Since the early 1990s, Blumenthal's career has been defined by proximity to power in the form of Bill and Hillary Clinton. As a *New Yorker* correspondent, White House adviser, and, more recently, a highly paid (if unclearly tasked) employee of the Clinton Foundation, Blumenthal has remained Bill and Hillary's most pugnacious and loquacious loyalist, half-courtier and half-captain-at-arms. Often lobbing a wisp of flattery or a salivating suggestion back to the palace courtyard, for the most part he has earned his keep as a fierce and perhaps not overly scrupulous defender of Fortress Clinton.

Blumenthal's relish for political combat sprinkles these pages with dashes of spiky wit. Weak entrants into the field of battle are summarily drawn and quartered: The New York radical Gerrit Smith is dismissed as a "delusional…trust fund abolitionist"; the "preternaturally bland" Millard Fillmore comes off as "a man without qualities," whose "vanity exceeded his mediocrity." Of the obese and unimaginative Democrat Lewis Cass, Blumenthal writes that "he had the momentum of inertia."

But what really distinguishes Blumenthal's analysis is his focus on politics as a relentless war for public opinion. In 1844, for instance, Congressman John Quincy Adams stormed over to the State Department and charged Secretary John C. Calhoun with abusing census data in order to fill his official correspondence with proslavery talking points. Blumenthal comments acidly: "Adams's ruthless humiliation of Calhoun, exposing his intellectual and political squalor before an audience consisting mainly of himself, was personally gratifying…but had no public resonance." For Blumenthal, this kind of moral and intellectual performance, totally devoid of popular effect, doesn't even qualify as a political act.

So Blumenthal prizes Lincoln's oratory not for its pure philosophical power, but for the political work it accomplished. Unlike Adams, Blumenthal's Lincoln "was always tactical and strategic. Deliberate, methodical, and meticulous, he crafted every line for political impact."

To capture Lincoln's mastery of popular rhetoric, Blumenthal's books are studded with lively, often insightful close readings of his speeches and writing. In almost all of them, context takes precedence over text. The famous 1838 Springfield Lyceum Address, in which a young Lincoln worried that a man of "towering genius" might subvert American democracy? Blumenthal reads it as an ironic warning shot aimed at the would-be Napoleon of the Illinois Democrats, the five-foot-tall Stephen Douglas. Lincoln's first major antislavery speech, also delivered in Springfield, 15 years later? Blumenthal shows that it was not just an ethical argument for human equality or a constitutional case for the restriction of slavery, but also a fundamentally "strategic" effort to organize the diverse strands of antislavery opinion into a coherent and viable opposition.

Blumenthal's method bears the deficits of its virtues. His focus on context sometimes obscures the deeper ideological stakes of political warfare: We learn much about tactics and positioning, but less about what kind of world the various combatants were trying to build. It also produces a narrative that careens fitfully across the mid-19th-century American scene. In every section of Blumenthal's first two volumes, there is a digressive chapter; in every chapter, a digressive paragraph; in every paragraph, a digressive parenthesis. Some of these side trips are worthwhile, as when Blumenthal uses a legal dispute over Mary Todd's inheritance to recount the violent death of antislavery politics in antebellum Kentucky. Other excursions, including a sensationalized spin on the politics of Mormonism in Illinois—drawn largely from outdated secondary sources—are much less rewarding. And Blumenthal's relentless parentheses, stuffed to the gills with odd scraps of political genealogy, eventually grate on the reader's patience.

At times, the accumulated experience feels less like absorbing a master narrative of American politics than being buttonholed in the corner of a smoke-filled room by a zestful and manically rambling party

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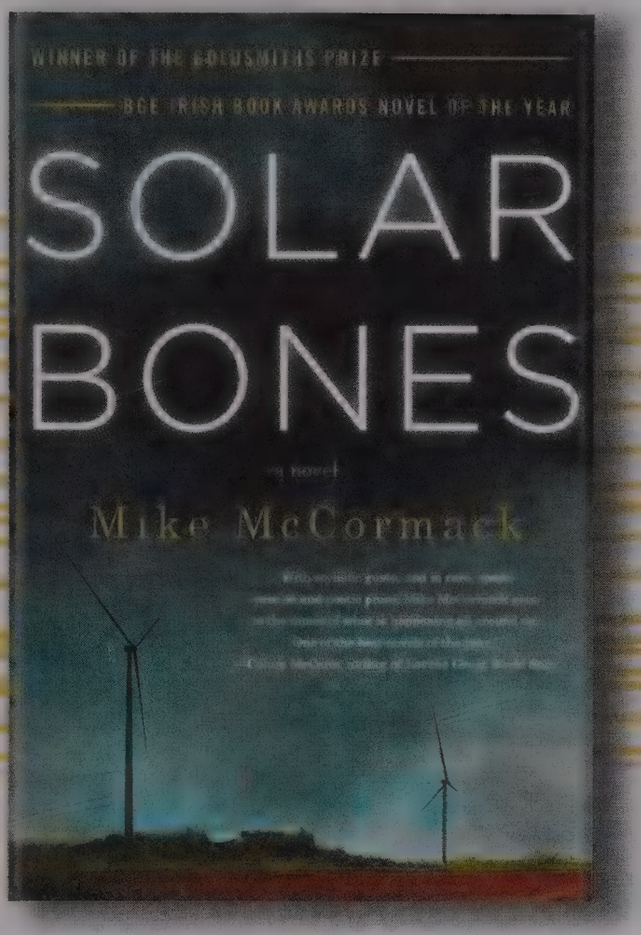

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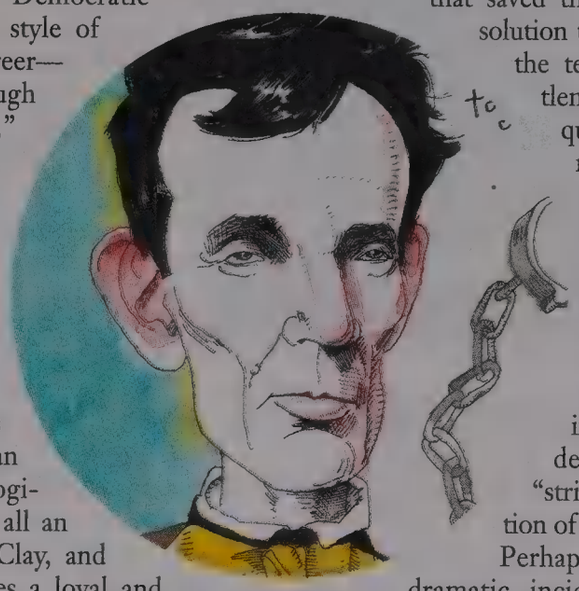
boss. Between gulps of whiskey, he might delight his audience with a story about how a Kentucky abolitionist blocked a pistol bullet with his knife scabbard, then cut off his assailant's ear—but he is just as likely to tell you, for the third time, about the spectacular feats of wire-pulling that put Millard Fillmore on the 1848 Whig ticket in place of Abbott Lawrence.

The larger problem is that a biography of Abraham Lincoln, however expansive, is an awkward vehicle for covering the terrain that Blumenthal really wants to explore: the collapse of the American party system and the emergence of a mass political organization opposed to slavery. The trouble is that Lincoln did not make the Republican Party; it would be closer to the truth to say that the Republican Party made Lincoln. In some ways, Blumenthal's detailed narrative of Lincoln's pre-1854 political career makes this clearer than ever before.

From the moment he entered politics as a 23-year-old candidate for the Illinois Legislature, Lincoln devoted himself to opposing Andrew Jackson's Democratic Party. The quaint style of Lincoln's early career—a "gawky and rough looking fellow," friends recalled, with his pantaloons six inches above his shoes—is much better remembered than its specific content. But Lincoln's politics were always both deeply partisan and deeply ideological. He was above all an acolyte of Henry Clay, and for two full decades a loyal and ardent Whig. As a state-legislative captain in the 1830s, and a central Illinois party boss in the 1840s, Lincoln gave the best years of his youth to the Whig economic agenda: defending banks, tariffs, railroads, and canals, and opposing Jacksonian attempts to subvert them.



To be sure, Lincoln quietly nurtured more radical convictions. "I have always hated slavery," he told a Chicago audience in 1858, "I think as much as any Abolitionist." Blumenthal makes much of this personal belief, tracing the influence of antislavery ideas on the Lincoln family's migration out of Kentucky, and arguing persuasively that Lincoln's own teenage experience as an indentured farm laborer in Indiana fueled his "unsmotherable hate" for the peculiar institution.

Yet for the first 45 years of Lincoln's life, the gap between the personal and the political could hardly have been larger. Lincoln's hatred for slavery may not have been smothered, but under the heavy blanket of Whiggery it was certainly suppressed. Although the young Lincoln found a handful of isolated opportunities to record an antislavery preference, he was enlisted far more often in a national political effort that necessarily involved attacks on abolitionism, and sometimes—as in the 1840 presidential campaign—accusations that his opponents supported "negro suffrage" or some similar horror.

The Whig Party was a national organization, which meant that Southern slaveholders constituted a critical mass of its voters and a critical wing of its leadership. Lincoln's "beau ideal of a statesman," the Whig hero Henry Clay, was himself an owner of slaves. Clay won fame as the Great Compromiser, the man who crafted the sectional bargains that saved the union from dissolution time and again. But the terms of Clay's settlements required the question of slavery to remain outside national politics. And the one group that Clay never compromised with was the abolitionists: Their "wild, reckless, and abominable theories," he declared in 1850, "strike at the foundation of all property."

Perhaps the single most dramatic incident of Lincoln's Whig career came in 1842, when the Democratic state auditor, James Shields, challenged Lincoln to a duel. Lincoln chose broadswords as the weapon and named a fellow Kentucky-born Whig as his second: Albert Taylor Bledsoe, who later moved to Mississippi and became a leading proslavery propagandist. The duel was eventually called off, but not before Lincoln spent some afternoons practicing at swords with a future Confederate assistant secretary of war. The great object that brought Lincoln and Bledsoe together—and the issue that sparked the challenge in the first place—was a shared Whiggish conviction that paper notes issued by the State Bank of Illinois should be acceptable for state tax payments. Even as the population of enslaved Americans doubled between 1820 and 1850, these financial debates—rather than the basic question of human beings as property—occupied the greater part of Lincoln's career as a Whig.

Blumenthal's narrative, as if weary of its subject's political timidity, regularly flashes forward to the future. *A Self-Made Man* ends in 1849, but the book is packed with quotations from a later and greater Lincoln—battling slavery with the Republican Party in the 1850s, or with the Union Army in the 1860s, rather than accommodating it with the Whigs in the 1840s. As a Whig, Lincoln's antislavery feelings did not define his politics; they only adorned them on special occasions. For that to change, a radical transformation was required.

That political revolution is the subject of Blumenthal's second volume. Channeling Shakespeare, Lincoln's favorite author, Blumenthal has assembled an extensive dramatis personae to stand at the front of each book, but in his overstuffed volumes, the narrative effect is less *Macbeth* or *Hamlet* than an antebellum version of *Game of Thrones*. Across these pages, various factions of House Jackson and House Clay jockey for power in the capital, even as a more desperate and more elemental struggle—over the future of slavery and freedom on the continent—begins to take shape.

Blumenthal introduces the second book in this vein: "Premonitions of civil war, shattering deaths, fatal compromises, crushing defeats, corrupt bargains, brazen betrayals and reckless ambition joined in a pandemonium of political bedlam. Presidents rose and fell.... On the Western plains, a pristine battlefield was cleared, democracy trampled in the name of popular sovereignty, and ruffians and pilgrims armed for a struggle to the death over slavery." You can almost hear the beat of dragon wings.

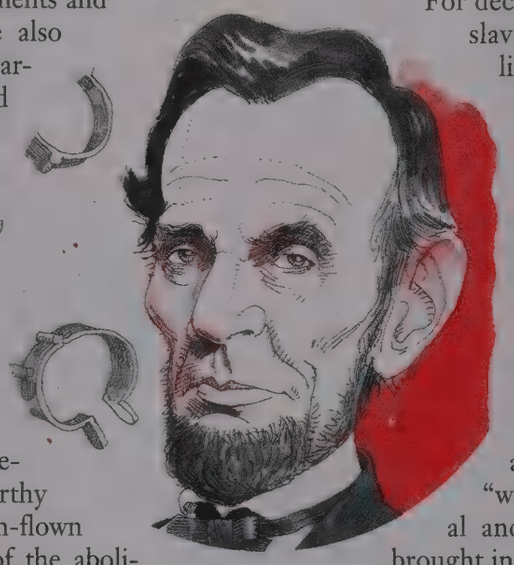
In fairness, when called upon to describe the battle between slavery and freedom, Lincoln himself was prone to such primal language. "The day of compromise has passed," he told his law partner William Herndon. "These two great ideas have been kept apart only by the most artful means. They are like two wild beasts in sight of each other, but chained and held apart. Some day these deadly antagonists will one or the other break their bonds, and then the question will be settled."

The political transformation of the 1850s unchained these wild beasts, opening the struggle that smashed the party system, spawned the Civil War, and ultimately destroyed slavery itself. Yet as Blumenthal explains, the event that triggered the revolution did not emerge from the agitation of radicals, but from the ambition of politicians. It was Stephen Douglas's desire to unite and dominate a divided Democratic Party that led him to push for a bill to establish the Nebraska Territory in 1854. Prodded by proslavery leaders in Washington, Douglas agreed that the Kansas-Nebraska Act would annul the Missouri Compromise, essentially removing all legal restrictions on slavery's westward expansion. He knew the bill would provoke "a hell of a storm," but the tempest was even wilder than Douglas anticipated, wrecking the Northern Whigs and rousing formerly cautious men like Lincoln to throw in their lots with the new Republican Party.

Of course, this was only half the story. Why were the foes of slavery so well prepared to make the most of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the outrages that followed? As Blumenthal acknowledges, this part of the narrative doesn't center on faithful partisans like Lincoln, but on more daring and experimental antislavery politicians like Ohio's Salmon Chase and Massachusetts's Henry Wilson. While Lincoln trudged along under the Whig banner, these third-party radicals developed the constitutional argument—and the political strategy—that equipped antislavery forces to seize control of mainstream politics in 1854 with the launch of the Republican Party.

Since the early 1840s, as a member of the tiny abolitionist Liberty Party, Chase had struggled to reorient American politics around the fundamental question of slavery. Fortified by a belief that most Northerners opposed the spread of slave institutions into the West, Chase and his allies sought to build an antislavery political organization on the basis of this sturdy if silent majority. An absolute commitment to the nonextension of slavery, they believed, could help an antislavery party win at the polls, toppling the so-called Slave Power in Washington and setting the stage for a political battle against bondage within the South.

Although Blumenthal covers these antislavery political maneuvers, his view of the larger American struggle against bondage is unfortunately narrow. He describes some of the most dramatic runaway-slave controversies that gripped the North after the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, but he does not treat the fugitives themselves—or the black and white abolitionists who aided them—as significant political actors. Scoffing at the "absolutism and sectarianism" of activists like William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass, Blumenthal indulges in the hard-boiled insider's naïveté about the relationship between social movements and political change. He also ignores recent scholarship that has stressed the expansive democratic commitments of these abolitionists and their vital role in mobilizing and sustaining pockets of antislavery opinion across the antebellum era. Drawing an unhelpful contrast between Lincoln's earthy realism and "the high-flown moral preachments of the abolitionists," Blumenthal fails to see that what distinguished the 1850s was, in fact, a rare and deep congruence between political radicals and radical activists: What Charles Sumner called the larger "antislavery enterprise" stretched from Lincoln all the way to Frederick Douglass.



This is the history of politics as a history of politicians. Yet on the politicians themselves, Blumenthal delivers the goods. Although Lincoln did not found the mass antislavery movement, when it arrived in 1854, he soon became one of its indispensable leaders: "at first he dodged them," Blumenthal notes; "but then he led them." It was Lincoln's historic task to grasp the constitutional edifice developed by Chase and others and add the democratic muscle required to forge the new majority they had envisioned. This he began to do with a series of remarkable speeches, in which he drew on all the rhetorical and strategic resources of his apprenticeship in antebellum politics. Lincoln ranged selectively but effectively across history in order to prove that "our revolutionary fathers" had really fought to end slavery. He dressed philosophical principle in the homespun garb of common sense: "What I do say is, that no man is good enough to govern another man, *without that other's consent*." Above all, he linked the struggle against the master class to the broader cause of popular democracy: The extension of slavery, as Lincoln wrote, "enables the first FEW to deprive the succeeding MANY, of a free exercise of the right of self-government."

In the landscape of antebellum America, this amounted to a revolutionary political program. The Republicans sought to contain slavery in order to isolate and terminate it—to put it on the road to "ultimate extinction," as Lincoln said in 1858. For decades, that kind of antislavery commitment had lived only on the leftmost fringe of American politics. (As recently as 1852, the Free Soil Party, with a similar antislavery platform, attracted just 4.9 percent of the national vote.) Yet through the new Republican Party, as Blumenthal notes, "what had been marginal and peripheral could be brought into a new center."

Given the course of Blumenthal's own political career, this point bears emphasis. The centrist position in the 1850s was straightforward: Restore the Missouri Compromise, no less and no more, without any additional cant about overthrowing the Slave Power or blocking all forms of slavery's expansion. For an antebellum Dick Morris or Mark Penn, this path would have been obvious, and the road to electoral victory clear. But Lincoln fought to remake the center—not to compromise under its immovable weight. On the question of slavery's future, Lincoln became the Great Uncompromiser.

"Lincoln," says Blumenthal, "always wanted to win." Yet as these volumes show, after 1854 he didn't want to win simply by gaining office. He wanted to win by changing the world—by affirming what he called "the monstrous injustice of slavery itself," and by ousting the slaveholding aristocracy that ruled the United States.

The unglamorous arts of partisan politics helped Lincoln lead the Republican Party, but they cannot explain why that party remained so single-mindedly focused on slavery and so stubbornly opposed to compromise. For Lincoln the Republican, political triumph did not mean winning power by co-opting the ideas of his opposition or developing a "Third Way" between abolition and slavery; it meant rallying a democratic majority behind a shared vision of the possible. This required transformation, not triangulation. Eventually, it took revolution. ■

The New Thinking

Mikhail Gorbachev set out to transform the Soviet Union from within. What happened?

by KEITH GESSEN

In 1996, in what as of this writing remains the last competitive presidential election in Russia, Mikhail Gorbachev decided to throw his hat in the ring. Boris Yeltsin was then in his fifth year in office, and the fledgling Russian Federation had descended into chaos. Yeltsin's privatization reforms had led to widespread misery; he had shelled his own Parliament and launched a brutal war on Chechnya. Having started both the initial democratization and the economic reforms of which Yeltsin was at once the beneficiary and gravedigger, Gorbachev thought he could do better. And perhaps Russians might want him to return? After all, he had lost his presidency in a nontraditional manner—the country of which he was president had ceased to exist.

Plus, Gorbachev hated Yeltsin. The two were near contemporaries. They both had come from humble backgrounds and had risen through the party apparatus to the upper ranks of the Soviet system, only to find that they doubted the system could continue. Beyond these similarities, however, the two were polar opposites. Gorbachev was studious, calculating, and a talker; Yeltsin worked by instinct and was master of the grand gesture. Gorbachev had sought to reform the Soviet Union gradually, thereby saving socialism from itself; Yeltsin's drive for power and reckless style of governance had destroyed socialism, the Soviet Union, and possibly even Russian sovereignty. Gorbachev's hope was that his milder social-democratic vision might finally get a fair hearing.

It did not. Gorbachev was mocked and

Gorbachev
His Life and Times
By William Taubman
Norton. 880 pp. $39.95

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ILLUSTRATION BY **TIM ROBINSON**

ridiculed everywhere he went. His old high school wouldn't let him address its students. Some of this activity was encouraged by Yeltsin; some of it was spontaneous. In Omsk, a 29-year-old unemployed man dashed past Gorbachev's bodyguards and slapped the former leader of the Soviet empire in the face. In the end, thanks possibly to some creative vote-counting, and definitely to hundreds of millions of dollars in illegal campaign funds from the oligarchs, an ailing Yeltsin was elected to a second term. Gorbachev received less than 1 percent of the vote.

In his thorough and highly readable new biography of Gorbachev, William Taubman does not dwell on the 1996 campaign. It strays perhaps too far from his central tale, which is of Gorbachev's courageous and historic ending of the Cold War. But the story of the election does comport with another theme of Taubman's book and Gorbachev's life: the fact that the man who is lionized in the West as one of the great statesmen of the 20th century is treated at home with contempt. For Westerners, Gorbachev brought a period of peace, calm, and prosperity; for Russians, he surrendered the empire without a fight.

Mikhail Gorbachev was born in 1931 in a village in the southern Russian region of Stavropol. His parents and grandparents were farmers, which in that era put them in the very crosshairs of Soviet power. One grandfather, who was relatively successful, was opposed to communism and refused to join a collective farm; the other, who was much poorer, helped start one of them. In the end, both were arrested: the anticommunist grandfather in 1934, for withholding grain from the regime, and the communist grandfather in 1937, during Stalin's purges of Soviet officials.

Both survived and returned to their families, but it was Gorbachev's maternal grandfather, the collective-farm chairman, who talked about his experiences. Weeping, he described to his family the torture meted out by his interrogators. He spoke about it only once, but the memory left an impression on the young Gorbachev. Collectivization had been both a political and an economic policy. Politically, it was meant to break the back of the independent peasantry; economically, it was meant to gather Soviet farmers on large mechanized farms so they could (in theory) produce food more efficiently. On both accounts, the results were catastrophic: Millions starved to death, and further famines were only prevented by an allowance for private plots. There may have been a short-term political gain for a new government that could shoot, starve, and exile so many of its supposed enemies. But in the long term, it was the grandson of one of these enemies who eventually destroyed the Soviet Union itself.

For the moment, though, Gorbachev remained a believer. He had a happy childhood; the hard times of the 1930s and '40s were cushioned by his family's relatively good position within the collective farm. His mother was a hard woman, but he was close to his father, who managed to return from the front despite a letter sent to his family informing them that he had died. Gorbachev was a good student, always reading, and a hard worker: At the age of 17, he teamed up with his father to bring in the largest combine harvest in the entire region. Taken together, these achievements earned him admission to Moscow State University, the finest in the country.

Taubman paints a vivid portrait of Moscow State in the last years of the Stalin regime and the first, tentatively thawing years after it. Moscow may have been, as one of Gorbachev's classmates recalled, "a huge village of wooden cottages, [where] people scarcely had enough to eat [and where] instead of flush toilets there was only an opening leading to a drain pipe." But the university was an oasis apart. Its students did not consist primarily of young men from collective farms: Most were Muscovites who were well prepared for college. Some, especially after Stalin's death, were also willing to talk about their skepticism of Soviet power.

Gorbachev was here, as everywhere else, a fast learner, and after a short period of seeming like a hayseed from the provinces, he started to blend in. He debated Stalinism with his classmates—he knew far more about the devastation of collectivization than they did—and courted a fellow student named Raisa Titarenko. The other important friend he made during this time was a Czech student named Zdenek Mlynar, who would later be a key participant in the Czechoslovakian attempt to build "socialism with a human face" in 1968.

After graduation, Gorbachev went back home to serve in the apparatus in the regional capital of Stavropol. As a local with a degree from Moscow State and no bad habits, he rose rapidly through the ranks, survived the changing of the guard from Khrushchev to Brezhnev, and was made head of the entire Stavropol region at the tender age of 37.

From his increasingly higher posts, Gorbachev saw that the Soviet system wasn't working; at the same time, he thought it could be fixed. When the Prague Spring came along, he duly denounced it, urging the Soviet Union to "come to the defense of socialism in Czechoslovakia"—i.e., to send in the tanks. (Mlynar was eventually exiled to Vienna.) As regional party secretary, Gorbachev used old-style Soviet mass mobilization to exceed harvest targets; when a section of a major canal was completed in the region, he celebrated under a banner that read "the Kuban River will flow wherever the Bolsheviks tell it to." But he did not hide from the leadership his worries about the system he was being groomed to inherit. In what Taubman calls a "radical memorandum" to the Central Committee in 1978, Gorbachev referred to the collective-farm system as an "internal colony" that was being exploited by Soviet power. These were not the words of a timeserver or cynical bureaucrat. And yet he kept being promoted through the ranks.

Geography played its part. The Stavropol region is the gateway to the Caucasus Mountains; in happier times, this meant it was the favorite vacation destination of the Communist Party's demigods. Gorbachev got to play host several times to Yuri Andropov, the influential head of the KGB; to Mikhail Suslov, the longtime "gray cardinal" of Soviet politics; and to Alexei Kosygin, who had undertaken the most ambitious economic reforms of the postwar period, with some success. The sober-minded, hardworking, and true-believing Gorbachev made a good impression. In the late '70s, he was called to Moscow to join the Secretariat of the Central Committee and shortly thereafter the Politburo, the small governing council of the Soviet Union. In March 1985, after three

consecutive deaths among the old guard, he was elected general secretary—at 54, the youngest to assume the position since Stalin.

Gorbachev's ascent raises a philosophical question: Was he a historical accident, a unique figure who was superlatively skilled at navigating and then dismantling the Soviet bureaucracy? Or was his rise representative of a larger segment of young leaders whose families had experienced the traumas of Stalinism and who had come of age during the Khrushchev thaw? Reading Taubman, one gets the sense that Gorbachev was not an accident. True, he was only able to become general secretary because he had powerful patrons; but it was also the case that, once in power, he was able to find within the Communist Party a significant group of like-minded reformers. And the eventual emergence of the hated Yeltsin suggests that someone like Gorbachev would have come along sooner rather than later.

But the qualities that allowed Gorbachev to become general secretary also defined his limitations. He remained an insider. The man who now told his wife and the Politburo that "we can't go on living like this" was also the man who, according to a researcher quoted by Taubman, had earlier attended every Politburo meeting but almost never spoke at them, "except to say that whatever Brezhnev just said was just right." Gorbachev was not a Nelson Mandela or Vaclav Havel; he didn't build an independent base of support through opposition to the regime. Instead, he was a person from inside the regime, doing his best to save it.

"We can't go on living like this." But how were they to live? From Taubman, one learns that Gorbachev, once at the top, was uncertain about what to do. In the first few years of his rule, he turned to piecemeal programs: His two main initiatives were "acceleration" (everyone should work harder!) and a somewhat quixotic battle against alcohol. Acceleration failed—people saw no particular reason to work harder—while the anti-alcohol campaign proved to be deeply unpopular and a blow to the fragile Soviet budget, which earned billions of rubles from alcohol sales. Taubman recounts a joke from the period: A man frustrated with the long line in front of a liquor store announces that he's going to walk to the Kremlin and shoot Gorbachev. Shortly thereafter, he returns. What happened? he is asked. "When I got there I saw the line to shoot Gorbachev was even longer than this line, so I came back."

Gorbachev had announced glasnost ("openness") early in his reign, and as these other piecemeal reforms were running aground, he also announced perestroika ("rebuilding"). These were slogans more than programs, but they were programs, too. Both attempted to democratize different aspects of Soviet society: Glasnost sought to open up civil society and free the presses; perestroika sought to reform the economy and increase citizen participation in political life by introducing competitive elections and eventually breaking the Communist Party's monopoly on power. The political part of these programs was a success; the economic part, less so.

Taubman unfortunately devotes almost no attention to the economic challenges that Gorbachev faced, apparently assuming they are self-evident. But we should list them. The Soviets employed central planning, meaning that the state dictated in advance how many cars, pants, and shoes were to be produced each year and by which factory, and how many pounds of meat and butter and steel, and how many bombs. This created distortions in both information and incentives. And yet, as many scholars of the Soviet economy have pointed out, the system worked. It worked inefficiently, but it created full employment (plant managers had no incentive to fire people), consistently returned modest rates of growth, and basically fed, clothed, and housed the Soviet people. Enough was left over to also field the world's second-most-fearsome military machine.

The Soviet Union could well have muddled along this way indefinitely. But three things happened. The first was external: After 70 years of trying to catch up with and overtake the West, the Soviet Union started to fall behind, a trend exacerbated by the cratering of oil prices in early 1986.. The second factor was internal: That the country's infrastructure was not world-class was no secret, but on April 26, 1986, a year into Gorbachev's tenure as general secretary, Reactor No. 4 at the Chernobyl nuclear-power plant went into meltdown. The worst nuclear accident in history was compounded by an incompetent bureaucracy that failed to notify the Kremlin in time, and by an incompetent Kremlin that failed to react with sufficient intensity once it was informed. The third and final factor was, ironically, Gorbachev's faith in the Soviet experiment. Muddling along wasn't good enough for the inheritors of Lenin's dream; something had to be done. Someone more cynical than Gorbachev would have been satisfied with tinkering around the edges; but Gorbachev was an idealist. "We've got to act like revolutionaries," he declared, "to set the process in motion and then we'll see."

And so the Soviet Union had perestroika. But the decision to proceed did not absolve Gorbachev of the basic paradoxes of his character and position. He was a consummate insider seeking to dismantle the system that had raised him; he was, as Taubman shows, an autocrat who forced democracy on an entrenched bureaucracy, not because they supported it, but because they were in the habit of doing what the general secretary told them to do. He was prone to seeking consensus, and yet he was embarking on a series of controversial reforms. In the end, because of his compromises with Politburo hard-liners, the reforms he forced upon the party apparatus were bold enough to upend the system but not bold enough to renew it. So the system fell apart.

The economy was confusing. But on the international stage, Gorbachev knew just what to do: He called for a "New Thinking" when it came to foreign policy and began to herald a vision of a "common European home." In 1986, he also started a series of summits with President Ronald Reagan. Gorbachev's goal in the negotiations was to slow down the arms race so that he could devote more resources to the consumer sector. This wasn't as easy as it looked. Soviet leaders had come to the table with disarmament proposals before without really meaning them, and there was also a strong constituency on the American side that enjoyed building more and more arms. But Reagan seized the opportunity. He had always believed that if Soviet and American leaders could just talk to one another, they could work out their differences. In Gorbachev, he had found his man.

Together, they agreed to cut down on nuclear and conventional warheads. When, after the election of the cautious George

H.W. Bush in 1988, there was some question as to whether the thaw between the superpowers would continue, Gorbachev unilaterally announced that he was downsizing the Soviet army by 500,000 and reducing troop levels in Eastern Europe. Gorbachev was ending the Cold War on his own timetable, if not on his own terms.

In these years, Gorbachev came, in essence, to lead a double life. In the West, he was treated like a hero: Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, François Mitterrand, Helmut Kohl—they all admired and appreciated him and swore their undying friendship. The international media adored him as well. When, during a 1987 visit to Washington, Gorbachev emerged from his limousine to talk to ordinary people, the people went nuts. Here was the man with a nuclear sword over their heads, now voluntarily withdrawing it. "Gorbymania" spread throughout the countries of the Western world. In 1990, Gorbachev won the Nobel Peace Prize.

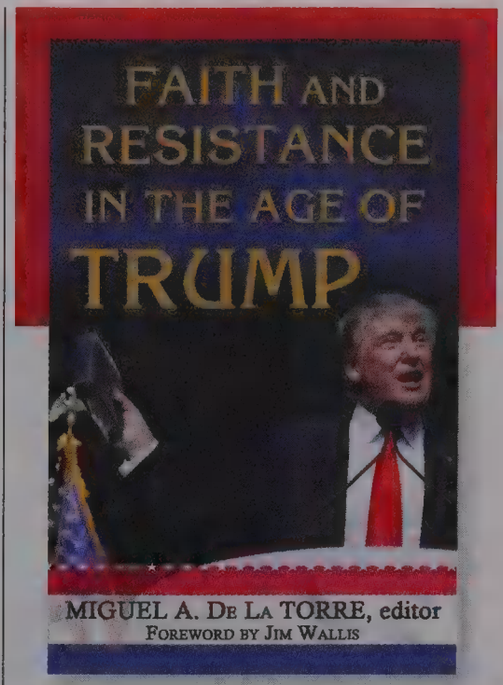
Meanwhile, back home, things were very different. Early in his tenure, Gorbachev had been presented with some radical economic-restructuring plans, but he ended up rejecting them. In 1990, a small group of leftist economists, including the future political leader Grigory Yavlinsky, put forward their "500 Days" plan toward a market socialist economy, but Gorbachev dismissed it as well. Instead, his economic policies—which sought to effect a gradual transition to a mixed economy—advanced in fits and starts. State enterprises were kept intact, with all their weird ways, but some independent businesses—so-called cooperatives—were legislated into existence. The result was a mixed economy in the worst sense: The old factories continued their old work, with less and less support from the government, while the new cooperatives could and did take advantage of all the distortions created by the command economy.

Many of the men later known as the oligarchs got their start during this period. One of them, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, came up with an alchemical and apparently legal way to bring tens of thousands of the nominal rubles held by state enterprises into the economy as actual rubles; another, Boris Berezovsky, infiltrated the massive Avtovaz auto factory. Gorbachev had hoped to tap into the native entrepreneurial spirit of his people, and he did. What he didn't realize—though he should have—is that capitalism isn't necessarily productive; it can be parasitic. In this case, capitalism attached itself to the massive Soviet economy and started sucking out its insides.

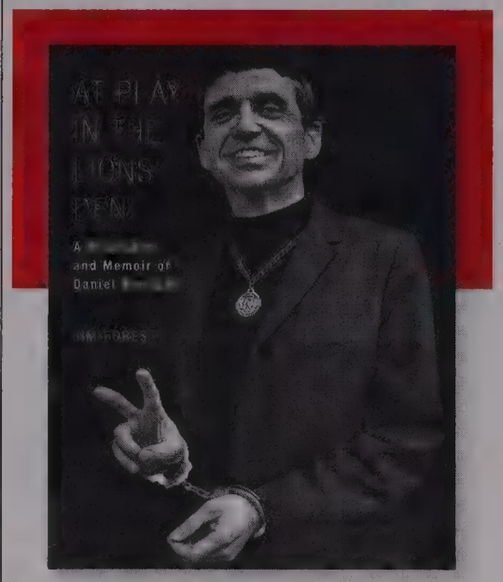
As the slow-motion economic collapse was taking place, Gorbachev freed the press under glasnost. This too was not an entirely organic process: The press tribunes of perestroika were not start-ups but old stalwarts like *Ogonyok*, *Novy Mir*, and the *Moscow News*. They were now allowed to print what they pleased, but it took a while for them to take Gorbachev's commitment to free speech seriously—for example, he had to personally clear the novel *Children of the Arbat* for publication. But eventually people got the point and stopped asking. (In the same way that, decades earlier, they had gotten the opposite point and stopped asking.)

The result was widespread criticism of his regime from all sides. The liberals were angry that economic reforms were moving too slowly and that Gorbachev refused to empty his Politburo of hard-liners. The communists were concerned that socialism was being destroyed from within. And then there were the nationalists: Very soon after glasnost came into force, ethnic Armenians and Azeris started killing each other in Nagorno-Karabakh. The conflict continued to simmer throughout the rest of Gorbachev's tenure, breaking out into a full-scale war in 1992, when it was no longer his problem. As troubling for the future of the Soviet Union were developments in the Baltic states, especially Lithuania, where nationalists seized on the opportunity provided by the new freedoms to organize and lobby for their independence. Gorbachev lost Eastern Europe in the fall of 1989; by mid-1990, the Baltic states had also declared their independence. The other ethnic republics lagged behind. Some of their populations wanted to remain in the USSR. But regional elites saw an opportunity for greater power, and they began to seize it.

This included Russia. Starting in May 1990, Yeltsin became the de jure leader of the Russian republic within the Soviet system, and immediately set about challenging the primacy of the Soviet government on Russian territory. One of his arguments was that Russia was a net loser, that it gave more to the empire than it got back and thus would be better off on its own. This move on Russia's part was the final nail in the empire's coffin. It was one of the strangest forces unleashed by Gorbachev's reforms—the imperial center itself undermining the empire—and likely the most significant.



Religious scholars, ministers, and activists—including Amir Hussain, David Gushee, Miguel Diaz, Sr Simone Campbell, George "Tink" Tinker, and Rabbi Steven Greenberg—address issues of gender, race, disability, LGBT justice, immigration, the environment, peace, and poverty, to name our situation and set forth an agenda for action.



An indelible portrait of the life and times of Jesuit priest, poet, and peace activist, Daniel Berrigan whose protests against the Vietnam war helped shape a generation.

We learn from Taubman that Gorbachev was not even remotely prepared for any of these developments. When he realized that Eastern Europe was on its way out, he didn't care: He hated the rigid Communist leaders of Romania and Bulgaria and East Germany and wished them good riddance. He also wasn't prepared for the nationalisms inside the Soviet Union and felt that there were bigger things to worry about: the domestic economy and his international summits. If he could solve the international situation and bring an end to the Cold War, he was convinced that he would also solve his domestic situation. And if he could solve his domestic situation, he would also be able to bring the rebellious republics back on board.

Reading through the account of Gorbachev's summits with world leaders, in which he gave up the empire and asked for nothing in return, one is struck by how naive Gorbachev could be. But this was something shared widely; many Soviet people had come to believe what they'd heard on Voice of America about the freedom-loving peoples of the West. Anatoly Chernyaev, a close adviser to Gorbachev whose diary provides many of the most vivid passages in Taubman's book, recorded his feelings after a particularly friendly meeting with West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl: It was, Chernyaev wrote, "a physical sensation of entering a new world defined not by class struggle, ideology, or hostility, but by a shared humanity." It was a beautiful dream, and one that Gorbachev embraced. Maybe Kohl and Reagan and Thatcher did so too, in their way. But they also lived in the real world.

Kohl had assured Gorbachev that the reunification of Germany would be a gradual process, and he also suggested that Germany might stay out of NATO. But reunification took place almost overnight, with full NATO membership attached. Likewise, James Baker, Bush's secretary of state, unquestionably indicated to Gorbachev that NATO would not expand eastward, a promise that the United States soon reneged on. "To hell with that," Bush said. "We prevailed. They didn't." It would have been far better for Russian security—and for European security as a whole—if Gorbachev had been able to drive a harder bargain. But his difficult situation on the home front made him desperate for a win. The Soviet Union's isolation left him unable to see just what was happening until it was too late.

Eventually, the various swift-moving currents in the country—the collapsing economy, the freewheeling public discussion, the loss of territory and spheres of influence—became too much for the old-timers that Gorbachev had allowed to stick around. A group of them, including the head of the KGB, the defense minister, the interior minister, and Gorbachev's own chief of staff, placed him under house arrest while he and his wife were vacationing in Crimea. With Gorbachev cut off from the world, the putschists declared a state of emergency. But in Moscow they failed to arrest Yeltsin, who rallied resistance from in front of the Russian White House and forced the coup plotters to fold. Gorbachev also folded in the end: When he was flown back to Moscow, he did not go to the White House to greet his ostensible supporters. He didn't go because, after several days of the couple being under house arrest and fearing for their lives, Raisa Gorbachev was ill. He also didn't go because he knew that he was no longer the leader of the country; Yeltsin was. Four months later, Yeltsin met with the presidents of Ukraine and Belarus and disbanded the Soviet Union. On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev resigned.

Looking back on the end of the Soviet Union from where we are now, it is not as obvious as it seemed then that it was an unmitigated good. Some countries have fared well in the post-Soviet period, while others have fared poorly. The same is true for individuals across the post-Soviet landscape, and nowhere more than in highly stratified Russia. Some people have amassed untold riches; others live in fear and insecurity such as would have been unenviable even in Soviet times. At this point, the early-'90s celebrations of the empire's peaceful disintegration seem out of place: More former Soviet republics have seen warfare on their territories than have remained at peace. Russia itself is now locked in a bitter rivalry, again, with the United States, this time from a dangerous position of weakness.

Could the Soviet empire have survived in some form? The answer for the Warsaw Pact and the Baltic nations is almost certainly no: Any amount of liberalization would have led almost immediately to their independence. Might the USSR have survived in its pre-1939 borders? Perhaps. But here as in so much else, the Soviet state had to answer for Stalin's crimes: His 1939 annexation of western Ukraine, for example, made it less likely that Ukraine would want to remain in any hypothetical USSR. On the question of whether Russia might have survived as a socialist experiment, the answers are even less clear. Some economists have argued that the entire Soviet economy was based on coercion and that any liberalization—even one less haphazard than Gorbachev's—would have led to economic collapse. Thus Philip Hanson's mordant quip: "Mikhail Gorbachev was the first Soviet leader who…did not understand the Soviet system. He was therefore the last Soviet leader."

But this seems to underestimate the power of actually existing socialist idealism. Some people really did believe in worker control, and some really did think they were building a better world. Perhaps for this reason, some of the bravest independent union representatives in Russia today identify themselves with the Communist Party, for all its obvious flaws. And worker ownership would eventually be promoted even by the neoliberal Yeltsin regime when it launched its disastrous voucherization policy in 1992, which gave workers tradable shares in the enterprises where they worked.

What if this or something like it had been tried not in the lawless and impoverished '90s, when most workers immediately sold their shares for a pittance, but in the more placid mid-'80s? What if, moreover, Gorbachev had run for president of Russia not in 1996, when he was one of the least popular politicians in the country, but in 1990, when he was still probably the most popular politician in the country and his election might have buttressed his case for union and reform? Obviously, we'll never know, and maybe it's just as well: A poor and backward country was always going to be a terrible place to test out socialism. A prosperous, powerful, and technologically advanced one, like the United States, remains a different matter. ■

Angela Carter, in the early 1970s.

BREAKING THE SPELL

For Angela Carter, literature had the power to upend the fictions that regulated our world

by NAMARA SMITH

The title story in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, the collection of reimagined fairy tales that contains her best-known work, is based on the legend of Bluebeard. Carter updates the story's setting to the late 19th century—the widowed husband smokes Cuban cigars, the young wife wears a Poiret shift to dinner—but otherwise retains its traditional contours. The familiar plot unfolds with a sense of inevitability, as if every action were preordained. The heroine drifts through the story like a sleepwalker, hypnotized by her husband's "heavy, fleshy composure," the rhythmic motion of the train that carries her to his castle in Brittany, the scent of the lilies that fill her bridal suite. Even when she discovers the bodies of his previous wives laid out in a gruesome tableau and it becomes clear that she is his next victim, the mood remains dreamlike.

The spell isn't broken until the story's final pages. In the 17-century version of the fairy tale by Charles Perrault, the bride is saved by her brothers-in-law; in Carter's, it's her mother, a military widow who comes galloping up the causeway, armed and dangerous, just as the killer is about to cut off the young wife's head. Carter narrates his reaction with a typical flourish: "The puppet master, open-mouthed, wide-eyed, impotent at the last, saw his dolls break free of their strings, abandon the rituals he had ordained for them since time began and start to live for themselves; the king, aghast, witnesses the revolt of his pawns." His authority shattered, the husband is reduced to "one of those clockwork tableaux of Bluebeard that you see in glass cases at fairs."

Variations on this scene—the moment when the strings are cut and a familiar story suddenly veers off course—recur throughout Carter's fiction. The strongest emotions in her work are elicited by the prospect of a leap into the unknown, the event that could not be predicted or controlled. Unlike many writers shaped by the upheaval of the 1960s,

The Invention of Angela Carter
A Biography
By Edmund Gordon
Oxford University Press. 544 pp. $35

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Carter never disavowed the politics of that period or treated them as a temporary madness; she remained committed, throughout her life, to the possibility of radical change. Her novels tend to conclude with either a wild party, an act of violent destruction, or a combination of the two. Although her fiction drew heavily on traditional folklore, she saw herself as being in "the demythologizing business." Myths, Carter asserted, are "extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree," and she adopted their conventions in order to blow them up. At the end of her second book, *The Magic Toyshop*, a Gothic reworking of *Paradise Lost*, the two main characters look at each other "in a wild surmise" as their house burns to the ground. "Nothing is left but us," the heroine says. She doesn't seem unhappy about it.

As Edmund Gordon emphasizes in his new biography, *The Invention of Angela Carter*, the allure of remaking oneself remained a constant throughout her life. Her notebooks and letters are filled with plans for self-improvement projects: to learn Gaelic as well as "the French they speak in France"; to work out how to "live off the land"; to dye her hair a different color; to redo the kitchen. Carter was enthralled by fashion, particularly its potential to antagonize others. At her first job—reporting for a local newspaper—she wore green lipstick until her colleagues complained. Decades later, when she bought her first house, she painted the outside blood red.

In the journal she kept as a young woman, Carter wrote a sentence from André Breton's *First Surrealist Manifesto* over and over: "The marvellous alone is beautiful. The MARVELLOUS alone is beautiful. The marvellous ALONE is beautiful." She loved storms, pyrotechnics, circuses. When she was 30, she moved to Tokyo to live with a Japanese man she had met and fallen in love with six months earlier. Two years later, after the relationship dissolved (she'd found another woman's lipstick on his underwear), she returned to London alone. Carter knew they weren't compatible, she told a friend, when she made him take her to a fireworks display and he was bored by it. Who could be bored by fireworks?

The first of Carter's transformations came in 1958. Born Angela Olive Stalker in 1940, she grew up in London, the only daughter of an overprotective mother who dressed her like "a doll" and refused to let her out of her sight. (Carter later said that she wasn't allowed to use the bathroom with the door closed until she was a teenager.) Food was rationed in postwar Britain, but Carter's mother set aside her own portions of sugar, butter, and milk for her daughter until Carter was, according to a family friend, "enormous."

When she was 17, in a dramatic assertion of autonomy, Carter began dieting ruthlessly. Within the span of a few months, she lost more than 40 pounds, took up smoking, and adopted a wardrobe calculated to shock her mother: tight black skirts, black stockings, black buckled boots, black fox-fur collars. Her father, a journalist known as "the Scheherazade of Fleet Street" for his romantic imagination, found his increasingly independent daughter work at a local newspaper. Considered too unreliable to report stories, Carter was assigned to write music reviews, something for which she showed surprising talent. She cultivated a taste for avant-garde jazz—another thing for her mother to hate—and began dating a man named Paul Carter, a 27-year-old industrial chemist moonlighting as a clerk at a cult record store. Their relationship might have unfolded differently if he hadn't insisted that they wait to have sex until they were engaged; as it happened, they were married by the time she was 20.

Carter once called *Wuthering Heights* "one of the greatest, if not the greatest, love stories ever written," and in her fiction the male romantic leads tend to be feral, violent, and encrusted with dirt. Paul, by contrast, had the soul of a record-store clerk. Self-enclosed and painfully serious, he was described by Carter after they first met as a "simple, artsy Soho fifties beatnik"; one of her friends called him "an amiable teddy bear." In her later years, Carter tended to downplay the importance of the marriage (she claimed to have had "more meaningful relationships with people I've sat next to on aeroplanes"), but Gordon makes it clear that Paul influenced her considerably. What he offered wasn't just an escape from her mother, but a gateway to the counterculture. A passionate music fan, he was an amateur record producer with a folk-music label; his specialty was mostly in recording traditional singers and fiddle players, but he was established enough to have worked with Peggy Seeger, sister of Pete and the queen of the British folk revival. After the wedding, the Carters moved to the suburbs of Bristol, where Paul started a traditional-ballad night in a local pub and the couple became locally established as "the Folk Singing Carters."

Paul and Angela were also both politically active. They were enthusiastic members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which had strong ties to the folk scene. Some of Carter's "most moving and beautiful memories" were of going on the annual antinuclear Aldermaston March with him. "It seemed, then," she wrote, "that in the face of those immense shows of serene public indignation—exhibitions of mass sanity, as they were…protest might change things."

In unexpected and significant ways, the folk revival of the late '50s and early '60s had a formative influence on Carter's fiction as well as her politics. She took from it an enduring commitment to folk traditions as a democratic and anti-elitist form that expressed "the creative urge of the anonymous masses." The traditional songs that Paul collected gave her access to an older, weirder Britain, a world of highwaymen, orphans, carnivals, sacrificial virgins, cunning animals, and wise grandmothers, whose imagery and themes she made use of throughout her work.

While Carter's early novels unfolded against the backdrop of postwar austerity—cold-water flats, shared bathrooms, cheap and starchy food—these mundane descriptions were punctuated by extravagant flights of imagination. When her first book, *Shadow Dance*, came out in 1966, it was unlike anything else being published at the time. Set in the "semi-criminal, semi-beatnik fringe" of a provincial city, it told the story of a bohemian junk dealer named Honeybuzzard who strangles a woman and then lays out her corpse with gold coins covering the eyes. Reviewers praised the book for its "strangeness." Although anchored in the social realism that was the dominant literary style of the early '60s, *Shadow Dance* was less a kitchen-sink novel of British alienation than one of those folk ballads whose "savagery" (a favorite word of hers) Carter admired.

This savagery seemed to slip into her home life. Carter resented being saddled with the domestic work in her marriage. "It never ends, the buggering about with dirty dishes, coal pails, ash bins, shitbins, hot water, detergent," she complained. She was an indifferent housekeeper (at one point, the dust in the kitchen was so thick guests could write their names in it), but she taught herself to cook and made ratatouille and coq au vin for the endless stream of folk musicians who passed through the house—doing "the earth mother bit," as she later called it. But this wasn't enough for Paul, who became quietly furious when she didn't do the dishes and who tried to discourage her literary ambitions. (After *Shadow Dance* was published, he didn't talk to her for three weeks.) Carter doesn't seem to have been particularly easy to live with herself: She wanted constant

attention, emotional and sexual, which Paul was unwilling or unable to provide. His main weapon against Carter, the stronger personality, was silence. When she confronted him directly, he withdrew.

As their marriage soured, Carter began to feel that what she'd imagined as an escape route had become its own kind of prison. "Marriage," she wrote in her journal, "was one of my typical burn-all-bridges-but-one acts; flight from a closed room into another room." Her growing dissatisfaction expressed itself in her writing. Reviewing the notorious 1966 UK tour of Bob Dylan, the former hero of the folk revival who'd become its Judas after electrifying his guitar, Carter pointedly took the singer's side. The performance she saw in Cardiff was "exhilarating," the jeering, discordant sound of "Like a Rolling Stone" a model of "mature savagery." Once a "Wonder Kid of Protest," the singer had reinvented himself as a "prophet of chaos," sweeping away old illusions to make room for something new. His acoustic songs had been "a comfort" for earnest, politically committed young people, but the electric Dylan was no longer comfortable. "People like comforts," Carter wrote. "But maybe comfort finally doesn't help very much."

By the end of the decade, as she grew estranged from Paul and the folk scene, Carter's work took on a harder edge. She started reading the Frankfurt School and the French poststructuralists, and her books began to explore the idea of the self as a contingent creation with no stable essence or spiritual home. When she won a prize for her third novel, *Several Perceptions*, she decided to use the money to travel to Japan. She wanted to go somewhere free of "the Judeo-Christian tradition." She also wanted a reason to finally leave her husband. In 1970, with her divorce settled and preparing to leave for Tokyo, Carter wrote in her journal: "No home. Nothing familiar anymore. I feel quite empty…like the newborn wanting to retreat back to the womb, knowing it is impossible and knowing there is no womb-surrogate anywhere, now."

In her essay "Notes From the Front Line," Carter dates the beginning of her interest in feminism to this period. As she began to question what she called "the social fictions that regulate our lives," she grew increasingly interested in the social fiction that concerned her most directly: "the nature of my reality as a woman." Feminism was always connected to her insistence that nothing ever stands still; everything—even our oldest and most basic social arrangements—are subject to the forces of history and human agency. This thought remained a source of continual exhilaration. In a remarkable passage midway through the essay, she suddenly bursts out: "The sense of limitless freedom that I, as a woman, sometimes feel is that of a new kind of being. Because I simply could not have existed, as I am, in any other preceding time or place." The undercurrent of delight running through her work, even in its bleakest moments, is connected to this sense of possibility. If so much could change, what else was up for grabs?

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Carter's relationship with the organized women's movement was thorny. Having come to feminism through Marcuse and Adorno, she considered herself a socialist before she was a feminist and saw women's liberation as part of a larger struggle for human freedom. She didn't have patience for goddess worship, which she dismissed as "consolatory nonsenses," or for what she called the "self-inflicted wound" school of women writers, by which she meant Jean Rhys and Joan Didion. Femininity was not an unchanging essence but a social role, and therefore something one could refuse to perform. Instead of bemoaning their fate, she thought, women should try to change it.

Carter's most extended elaboration of her views on feminism was her book-length essay *The Sadeian Woman*. An incendiary intervention in the sex wars of the late 1970s and early '80s, *The Sadeian Woman* seemed calculated to provoke anti-porn activists like Andrea Dworkin. ("If I can get up…the Dworkin proboscis," Carter observed, "then my living has not been in vain.") In the essay, Carter didn't bother defending porn from critics like Dworkin on the grounds of free speech or sex positivity. Instead, she went on the attack: Not only should feminists *not* ban pornography, she argued, but the Marquis de Sade—the most notorious pornographer of all time—was probably a better feminist than Dworkin and her allies were. Using the same argument she'd made for Dylan's embrace of the electric guitar, she insisted that Sade's writing was emancipatory precisely because it was violent and unpleasant. His great virtue was that his work "rarely, if ever, makes sexual activity seem attractive as such," and therefore opens the way to "the total demystification of the flesh" and the destruction of the myth of feminine virtue.

Carter's main exhibit regarding Sade's value for feminism was his particularly graphic illumination of the virgin/whore dichotomy in the novels *Justine* and *Juliette*. Justine, the angelic blonde, attempts to be virtuous and is raped and mutilated; Juliette, the evil brunette, cheats, lies, tortures, and murders, and becomes a wealthy and powerful woman. What this revealed, Carter argued, was the double bind that women face in a patriarchal society: Follow the law and become its victim, or break the law and be rewarded.

Bringing Sade's dichotomy into the 20th century, Carter identified Justine as Marilyn Monroe or Jayne Mansfield, the dumb blonde who naively believes whatever she is told and suffers for it. Juliette, on the other hand, is the *Cosmo* girl, "hard, bright, dazzling, meretricious," sitting in an executive office making phone calls to her stockbroker. As models for women, both were flawed and incomplete: Justine was capable only of pathos, Juliette only of calculation. Yet of the two roles, Carter preferred the latter. Justine was unable to help herself, let alone others. But by using her reason, "an intellectual apparatus women themselves are still inclined to undervalue," a woman who followed Juliette's example might manage to free herself from "some of the more crippling aspects of femininity."

Carter had originally been commissioned to write *The Sadeian Woman* by Virago in 1975. But she struggled with it, off and on, for several years. Of all her books, it was the one that seemed to give her the most trouble. The work was making her "agitated and depressed," she wrote to a friend in 1975; she worried that she had "bitten off more than I could chew" and that publishing it would be a mistake. A year later, she was still gripped by "the profound dread inspired by the idea that the book does not, maybe, work."

Some of this ambivalence is apparent in the finished essay. The overall thrust—

don't be *too* good—is a familiar feminist exhortation. But in using Sade to make this point, Carter was also drawing attention to the dark side of daring to be bad. Juliette, the original #girlboss, was plainly a monster. In seeking only her own advantage, she couldn't be part of a political community; because she obeyed no law other than that of her own self-interest, she foreclosed the possibility of solidarity with others. And yet, if you had to choose—and Carter's point was that, one way or another, every woman would be forced to eventually—wasn't it better to seek some measure of control over your situation than to suffer for no purpose?

Carter vacillates between praising Juliette for her autonomy and condemning her for her selfishness. In the end, she settles on a compromise: Juliette wasn't a model for the future, but perhaps she represented a temporary stage for the feminist movement. By adopting her take-no-prisoners tactics and "fucking as actively as they are able," Carter wrote, women might "be able to fuck their way into history and in doing so change it."

This theme is echoed in the stories that Carter was working on at the time and that were collected in *The Bloody Chamber*. "The Company of Wolves," her version of Little Red Riding Hood, concludes with the heroine discovering her own inner wolfishness; instead of letting the wolf eat her, she laughs and crawls into bed with him. In another version of this story, "The Tiger's Bride," Carter is even more explicit: "The tiger will never lie down with the lamb; he acknowledges no pact that is not reciprocal. The lamb must learn to run with the tigers." In each case, the moral of the story is clear: Be Juliette, not Justine.

After *The Sadeian Woman* and *The Bloody Chamber* were published, Carter began work on a longer treatment of a Juliette-like character, a novel about Lizzie Borden that imagined her murder of her parents as a desperate act of self-assertion. In the fall of 1980, however, she found herself "quite quickly, utterly repelled by the subject matter" and dropped the idea. Gordon doesn't speculate on why. Perhaps it was because Carter had fallen in love with a carpenter named Mark Pearce a few years earlier and was in a happy relationship with the man, who eventually became her second husband. But it may also have been because Margaret Thatcher was now prime minister, and it had suddenly become more difficult to write sympathetically about female ax murderers.

Carter had always defined herself against all forms of conservatism, but Thatcherism was something new and it seemed to catch her off guard. Everyone around her was getting rich. Her London neighborhood was in the second stage of gentrification, and the artists and writers who had settled there were being bought out by yuppies. Carter's housemate moved out to live with a banker "with an income roughly the equivalent of the GNP of a small Central American republic," leaving behind all her back issues of the *New Left Review*. Carter's protégé, Salman Rushdie, abandoned the literary agent that he and Carter shared for Andrew Wylie, who managed to sell the American rights to *The Satanic Verses* for $750,000. Carter remained with her agent and never made a six-figure publishing advance, but she admitted, in a letter to her former student Rick Moody, that she too was "earning more money under Thatcher than I have ever in my life before."

In response to the country's rightward shift, Carter became one of the new prime minister's most vocal antagonists. Before the general election of 1983, she wrote a withering essay on "the Thatcher phenomenon" in which she accused the Iron Lady of "low animal cunning," compared her to Countess Dracula, and—somewhat oddly for a writer whose fiction made such use of artifice—criticized the "artificiality" of her self-presentation. But though Carter got in some good one-liners, it is difficult to shake the impression that she was playing defense. In *The Sadeian Woman*, she had provisionally endorsed the idea of women doing whatever it took to gain power; now here was a woman forcing her way into the history books by any means necessary, and it was impossible to look upon the spectacle without horror.

Carter's final two novels, *Nights at the Circus* (1984) and *Wise Children* (1991), retreat from the savagery that had marked her previous work. The first, set in a fin de siècle traveling circus, was an exuberant fantasia about a winged Cockney trapeze artist meant to represent the "New Woman" of the 20th century; the second was a celebration of music-hall and working-class British culture narrated by a pair of illegitimate chorus girls. Both wear their politics on their sleeves—Fevvers, the heroine of *Nights at the Circus*, is both a protofeminist and a Bolshevik agent—and both feature strong and principled female characters who seem deliberately crafted to be nothing like "Mrs. Thatcher."

Reviewing Carter's body of work for *The New York Review of Books* after her death in 1992, the critic John Bayley infamously accused her novels of succumbing to "political correctness." In the essay's most cutting turn of phrase, Bayley wrote that "whatever spirited arabesques and feats of descriptive imagination Carter may perform, she always comes to rest in the right ideological position." Gordon intelligently contests this claim, pointing out that Carter was always an iconoclast and arguing that to charge her novels with following a party line is ridiculous. But if Carter's political commitments came into conflict with her literary imagination anywhere, it would be her last two. Fevvers, as well as the Chance sisters in *Wise Children*, bears no resemblance to the ethereal visions of femininity that Carter loved to puncture. They are vulgar, wisecracking, and cheerfully promiscuous. They eat constantly, swear frequently, and wear off-putting amounts of makeup for shock value. But they are always effortlessly strong and good-hearted; at once loving and autonomous, generous and independent, sensitive and resilient, they are less fully formed characters than idealized expressions of Carter's hopes for women.

"A free woman in an unfree society will be a monster," Carter wrote in *The Sadeian Woman*. But the heroines of her late novels are neither victims nor executioners. They transgress the law, but they do not murder. They tell lies, but only innocent ones. They are injured, but never seriously. No matter what happens to them, they pick themselves up and go on, like creatures made of rubber rather than flesh and blood. And thus, despite the novels' considerable charm, one feels there is something missing from them, as if Carter were telling herself a story she couldn't entirely believe.

Yet if Carter's heroines remain frustratingly indistinct, it's hard to blame her too much. In some ways, they are placeholders, reserving a space for the new kind of woman she envisioned was waiting just over the horizon. *The Sadeian Woman* ends with an extended quotation from Emma Goldman on the "true conception of the relation of the sexes." A world where both men and women are truly emancipated, Goldman wrote, "will not admit of conqueror and conquered; it knows of but one great thing: to give of one's self boundlessly, in order to find one's self richer, deeper, better. That alone can fill the emptiness, and transform the tragedy of woman's emancipation into joy, limitless joy." ■

Frequent Gunfire

What was it like to be Ernest Hemingway?

by JOHN BANVILLE

Ernest Hemingway
A Biography
By Mary V. Dearborn
Knopf. 752 pp. $35

The vigorously kicked-up dust has long since settled, and one wonders anew what all the fuss was about. He sent himself to Paris in the 1920s, which was the place to be just then. He shrewdly latched on to a lot of influential literary people and later learned how to be a celebrity by associating with stars of the screen and the corrida. He wrote a clutch of good stories and a handful of novels ranging from fresh and original through mediocre to abysmally bad—although the posthumously published *The Garden of Eden* is nearly very good, in its weird way. He mythologized himself as the Great American Novelist, despite the fact that none of his novels is set in America (except *To Have and Have Not*, a minor work) and he was arguably at his best in the medium of the short story. Later in life, he blundered into depression, alcoholism, paranoia, and manic delusion, and killed himself. At best, much of his life was only of passing notoriety—or so one would have thought—and yet the legend lives on, as tenacious as ever. How to account for it?

Perhaps a man possessed of an ego the size of a hot-air balloon could only subsist within a myth. To keep himself airborne required so much huffing and puffing that inevitably he ran out of breath. He was jeal-

John Banville's forthcoming novel, Mrs. Osmond, *will be published next month. Banville won the Man Booker Prize in 2005 for his novel* The Sea.

ILLUSTRATION BY **ANDREA VENTURA**

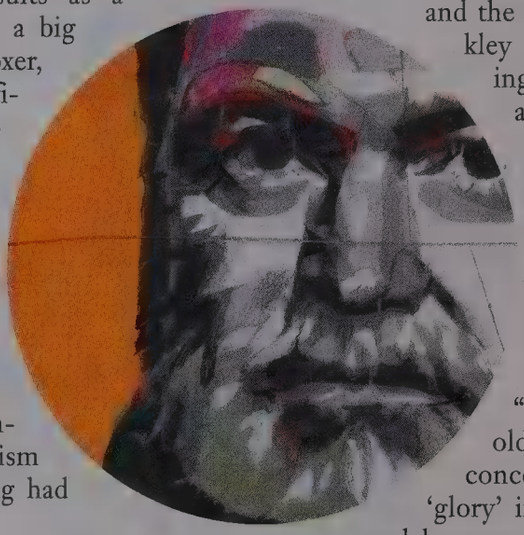
ous, insecure, treacherous to his friends, and merciless toward his promoters—no good turn, no matter how good it was, went unpunished—and although he overestimated his talent, he also largely wasted it, which was precisely the charge he had laid against his old pal F. Scott Fitzgerald, who, with *The Great Gatsby*, surely did write if not *the* then at least *a* great American novel. On the evidence of his letters and conversations as reported by Mary Dearborn in her new biography, he was also a racist, an unrelenting anti-Semite, and a homophobe, and while pretending to treasure women, he despised, feared, and failed utterly to understand them.

The term "literary lion" could have been invented for him, but he ended up in old age pacing the cage of his collapsing self-regard in ever more desperate circles. He—the real he—would have been the perfect subject for one of his own novels, only he would have heroicized and sentimentalized his image to such a degree that the fictional self-portrait would have turned out a travesty. And yet, for all that, there was a touch of the tragic to Ernest Hemingway that was almost ennobling, and his end was painfully sad.

Mary Dearborn, who has written biographies of Peggy Guggenheim, Henry Miller, and Norman Mailer—no shrinking violets, they—tells us that when she began to consider undertaking a life of Hemingway, she asked herself the question of "whether a woman could bring something to the subject that previous biographers had not." Then it occurred to her that perhaps "what I did not bring in tow" was precisely what fitted her for the task. "I have no investment in the Hemingway legend," Dearborn explains. "I think we should look away from what feeds into the legend and consider what formed this remarkably complex man and brilliant writer." A fine program for a biographer; the trouble is, behind the legend lay resentment and jealousy, meanness of spirit, writerly irresolution, and, more often than not, artistic failure—though the public of his time, avid for colorfully embroidered tales of derring-do, whether on the battlefield, on the hunting ground, or at the writing desk, refused to acknowledge it. The people's Papa was beyond reproach.

In her prologue, Dearborn recounts how, after a panel discussion on Hemingway's work in a New York City library in the 1990s, a professor and critic who she recognized, "a burly man with a peppery crew cut" whose specialty was American literature in the Jazz Age, stood up to announce that "Hemingway made it possible for me to do what I do." Afterward, she thought about the matter and came to the conclusion that the peppery professor had been

> talking about whether writing was an acceptable occupation for a man, both on his terms and the world's. Hemingway, not only in his extraliterary pursuits as a marlin fisherman, a big game hunter, a boxer, and a bullfight aficionado but also in his capacity as an icon of American popular culture, was the very personification of virility—and he was a writer. Any taint of femininity or aestheticism attached to writing had been wiped clean.



The insight is accurate, and it highlights one of the more malign aspects of Hemingway's legacy to American literature. By endlessly trumpeting the fact that one could be a writer and literary artist and at the same time preserve one's he-manhood, he goaded numerous male writers who came after him into baring their chests and swinging their fists and downing oceans of alcohol to show that they also could be tough guys.

It was a lot of nonsense, of course, but the damage was done. Look at the all-too-obvious example of Mailer, of whose growing reputation the aging Hemingway was sullenly jealous, referring to him sarcastically as the "Brooklyn Tolstoy." Mailer at his best was a very good writer, especially when he was writing journalism, yet in his Oedipal struggle with Papa, he chose to cast himself in the role of a Jewish fighting Irishman: getting into drunken brawls at parties, stabbing his wife, championing the cause of an unregenerate convicted murderer, and making a fool of himself by running a loud and farcical campaign for New York City mayor.

Dearborn notes that Mailer considered Hemingway "easily America's greatest living writer," but he also asked readers to consider how "silly" *A Farewell to Arms* and *Death in the Afternoon* would be if "written by a man who was five-four, wore glasses, spoke in a shrill voice, and was a physical coward." Apart from the absurdity of such a proposition—did not a little man of the type Mailer describes write *In Cold Blood*?—the obvious point is that those two novels, despite many fine qualities, *were* silly, as even some of Hemingway's acolytes will acknowledge. With its starkly described battle scenes and buttoned-down prose style, *A Farewell to Arms* must have seemed revolutionary in its day, but the love affair between its hero, Frederic Henry, and the nurse Catherine Barkley is deeply embarrassing, despite the author's attempts at tough-minded tenderness and a stoicism that keeps dissolving in heroically withheld tears. As Dearborn puts it, for all that Hemingway bragged about "getting past such old, hollow terms (and concepts) as 'valor' and 'glory' in pared-down, minimal language, *A Farewell to Arms* was a highly romantic war novel." Nothing wrong with that, of course, except that its author saw the book as, and probably believed it to be, something entirely other.

Looking back at the critical reception of Hemingway's novels at the time of their publication, one is baffled by the almost universal enthusiasm with which they were received by reviewers. Even such a finely discriminating assessor as Edmund Wilson was sometimes taken in by the fake machismo—mind you, is there such a thing as authentic machismo?—and saccharine emotionalism behind the tight-lipped tone of so much of Hemingway's writing. Wilson considered *The Sun Also Rises* to be the "best novel by one of my generation"—a generation, it should be noted, that included Fitzgerald—and he praised the "barometric accuracy" of *A Farewell to Arms*, although, to be fair, he did worry a little about what Dearborn describes as the "sentimentality he saw lurking in Hemingway's work." As she uses it here, "lurking" is a charitable word; a miasma of sentimentality hovers over everything Hemingway produced.

One suspects that the image of himself that Hemingway forged—surely the aptest word in the context—is founded in the history of his remarkable and remarkably troubled family. He was born in 1899 in Oak Park, a suburb of Chicago, a middle-

class child in a solidly middle-class milieu. He grew up strong, handsome, attractive, and troubled. His parents were entirely mismatched—dominant mother, diffident father—and he was still squabbling with his siblings, especially his sister Marcelline, well into adulthood. His lifelong fascination with gender identity probably sprang in part from the fact that when Ernest and Marcelline were toddlers, their mother, Grace, would dress them in matching outfits, sometimes as boys, sometimes as girls.

Of Grace Hemingway, it is an understatement to say that she was larger than life. "She had a generous, expansive, and loving nature," Dearborn asserts, and "her energy was inexhaustible," but surely she must have been for much of the time an unsustainable burden upon those around her. Grace was a singer who had her debut at Madison Square Garden under the conductor of the Metropolitan Opera, and, although she never made it as a diva, she worked diligently at her music, composing songs and taking on well-paying pupils. Dearborn writes:

> Later in life, when her voice had deteriorated to the extent that she could no longer give lessons, she took up art and taught that instead, as well as enjoying brisk sales of her paintings. She designed and built furniture. Later still, she had a lucrative career lecturing on such topics as Boccaccio, Aristophanes, Dante and Euripides, and wrote poetry as well.

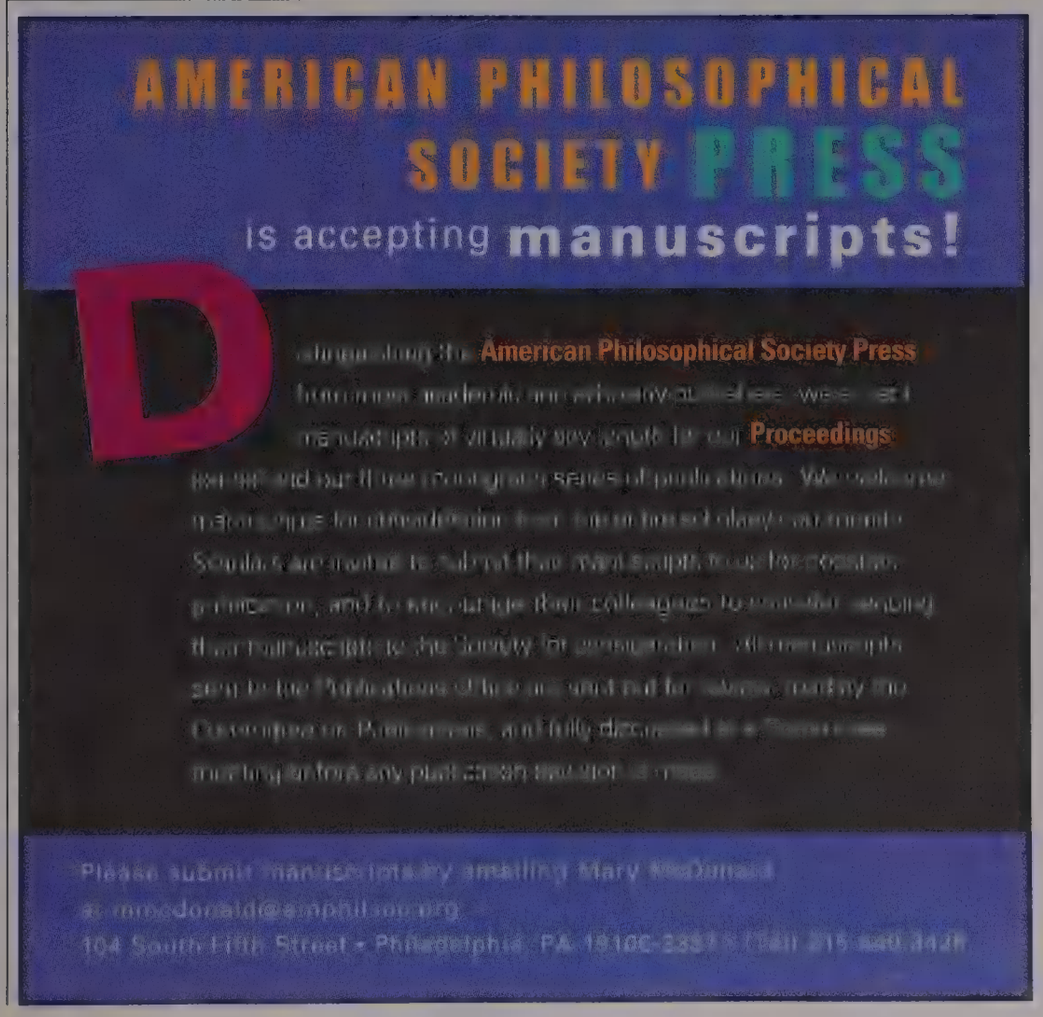
Hemingway famously defined courage as the ability to sustain grace under pressure; the condition of much of his own early life must have been, rather, pressure under Grace.

His father, Clarence, known as Ed, was an obstetrician; he was either fatally weak or an example of the enlightened modern man, depending on how you look at it. Ed largely assumed the role of homemaker, since, as his youngest daughter said, "My mother was exempt from household chores, because she must have time to practice her music." It was Ed who did the cooking, being particularly fond of baking, and he was "famous for his doughnuts." Fizzing with ambition, testosterone, and the urge to violence—"I like to shoot a rifle and I like to kill"—Ernest must have felt ambivalent, to say the least, before the spectacle of his father in an apron, with flour on his hands, busy over the stove. But Ed Hemingway was a man of the outdoors also, an enthusiastic hunter and fisherman and handy with a rifle, even if, here again, it was Grace who elbowed her way forward for the young Ernest. Dearborn writes, with shaky grammar: "As a little baby, his mother said, she held him in her left arm while she shot a pistol with her right, Ernest shouting with delight at every report."

The world of the Hemingways rattled with frequent gunfire, and it is no coincidence that Ernest's life should have been rounded with the awful symmetry of Ed Hemingway's suicide—he shot himself with the pistol his father had carried in the Civil War—and his own death decades later, on the morning of July 2, 1961, when he put both barrels of a shotgun to his forehead and pulled the trigger.

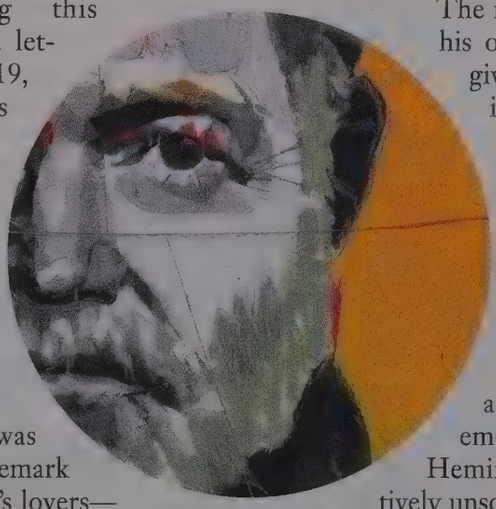
Yet it would be wrong to concentrate overmuch on the tragic aspects of the Hemingway story. As Dearborn reminds us, in the early years of his adulthood, he was a golden youth in a golden time. Postwar Paris, as he portrayed it lovingly but not always accurately in *A Moveable Feast*, was a dawning place in which it was bliss to be alive, and more blissful still to be a young literary star trailing clouds of war-wounded glory in his wake. Or as Sherwood Anderson more plainly put it, "Mr. Hemingway is young, strong, full of laughter, and he can write." He was also newly married, to Hadley Richardson, a handsome, motherly woman nearly eight years his senior, from whom he eventually would part, but whose memory he would honor for the rest of his life.

Hemingway's women were a decidedly mixed bunch. Hadley, whom he wrote about with a palpable ache of nostalgia in *A Moveable Feast*, was the most sensible and supportive of the lot, and certainly the one who understood him most clearly, in all his strengths and his more numerous weaknesses. Pauline Pfeiffer, his second wife, was the classic spoiled little rich girl, though she had a clever and perceptive side to her. Martha Gellhorn, who brazenly stole him from under Pauline's nose, was the hard-bitten woman journalist typical of the interwar years—think of Lee Miller, Lillian Ross, Dorothy Parker—and the one who made him most proud of possessing her, as he imagined he did. His last wife, Mary Welsh, is something of an enigma, being at once a hunting companion and a player with him of those erotic games—mostly centered on exchanging sexual identities, and his obsession with hair—in which he indulged with the highest serious-



ness. In *The Garden of Eden*, Hemingway writes with unexpected candor, though in fictional terms, of his strong hair fetish—he found the short hairstyles especially exciting—and what Dearborn identifies as his "ambivalence about and fascination with gender roles and sexuality, and a lifelong tendency towards androgyny."

There is also the abiding question as to the possibility of a homosexual element to his nature—the question, simply, as to whether he might have been gay. Dearborn is adamant on this, stating flatly on the first page of her book: "The short answer is no." But in areas as delicate as this, short answers are often inadequate to the occasion. There is, for example, the matter of Jim Gamble, a Red Cross captain 12 years older than Ernest, with whom, at the close of the First World War, he spent a holiday week in Taormina, Sicily, that left him with vivid memories. Dearborn, in this instance keeping firmly to her seat on the fence, notes that "some scholars have speculated that the two enjoyed a homosexual relationship during this time." Certainly, in a letter to Gamble in 1919, Hemingway writes with humid wistfulness of "old Taormina by moonlight and you and me, a little illuminated some times, but always just pleasantly so, strolling through that great old place...."



And then there was the seemingly telling remark by one of Hemingway's lovers—Agnes von Kurowsky, who nursed him in the hospital during the First World War and became the model for Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms*—to Carlos Baker, Hemingway's first biographer: "You know how [Ernest] was. Men loved him. You know what I mean." How much are we to make of such an innuendo, and is Dearborn being disingenuous recording it while yet withholding judgment on its significance? Hemingway would not have been the first red-blooded heterosexual to stray in youth from the straight and narrow sexual path. None of this would much matter, of course, if Hemingway had not flaunted his manly sexuality to an almost risible degree—a skeptical Zelda Fitzgerald remarked, "Nobody is as male as all that"—as he went about manufacturing the myth of himself.

A large component of that myth was Hemingway's enthusiasm for slaughtering animals large and small, from harmless game birds to lions, tigers, and elephants. The hunt, for him, was closely allied to warfare and to bullfighting, and to the two combined; as he remarked gleefully to a friend, speaking of the bullfight, "It's just like having a ringside seat at the war with nothing to happen to you." He occupied many a ringside seat, not only at bullfights but in battles too, but that he was courageous is beyond doubt, even if he saw no more than a fraction of the fighting he claimed to have done in various theaters of war.

Hemingway was famously injury-prone, but few of his injuries were come by in combat—as Dearborn wittily but witheringly notes, "If there is such a thing as a professional soldier, Ernest was a professional veteran." The plain fact is that, away from the battlefield, he was naturally clumsy, and had an unfortunate tendency to fall down and bang his head against hard surfaces.

The mishaps were not all of his own making. Dearborn gives a lively account—indeed, her book, at more than 600 pages of narrative, is lively and briskly entertaining throughout—of the famous air crash in Uganda in 1954, when the pilot lost control of the plane and had to make an emergency landing. The Hemingways escaped relatively unscathed, though the *New York Daily Mirror*, in its January 25 issue, reported them dead. Later on the same trip, they were involved in a much more serious airplane accident, which left Hemingway with, as Dearborn writes, "his fifth major concussion and probably the worst of any of them.... Ernest awakened the next morning to see that a wound in his scalp behind his right ear had leaked a clear liquid—cerebral fluid—on the pillow."

The successive physical injuries Hemingway suffered—it is striking how many of the photographs taken of Hemingway throughout his life show him with his head swathed in bandages—must have contributed to his steady decline, physical and mental, in the latter half of the 1950s. In these years, he was drinking quantities of alcohol that would have killed any ordinary person—he would start his day with a quart or two of beer before breakfast, and later move on to frozen daiquiris and jugs of iced martinis—and he was also taking what amounted to a pharmacopoeia of serious prescription drugs.

In 1961, the year of his death, Hemingway had been diagnosed as suffering from hemochromatosis, probably inherited from his father; the disease, which leads to an excessive buildup of iron in the body, causes physical and psychological disorders. The deterioration in Hemingway's health was unstoppable. As the end approached, his life must have been well-nigh intolerable, and one cannot but admire his tenacity in holding on, and pity him both for his physical afflictions and his mental anguish.

Family life, too, was a torment. His son Greg took merciless revenge on Hemingway for what he saw as his ill treatment. Addressing his father as "Ernestine"—Greg was himself a cross-dresser—and calling him a "gin-soaked abusive monster," the son wrote that "when it's all added up, papa it will be: he wrote a few good stories, had a novel and fresh approach to reality and he destroyed five persons—Hadley, Pauline, Mary, Patrick, and possibly myself." Nor did Greg stop there:

> You'll never write that great novel because you're a sick man—sick in the head and too fucking proud and scared to admit it. In spite of the critics, that last one was as sickly a bucket of sentimental slop as was ever scrubbed off a barroom floor.

If by "that last one" Greg meant *The Old Man and the Sea*—Dearborn does not cite the date of Greg's letter—one might want to employ more temperate language to describe that final novel but still concur with his assessment of the book, even though it helped win Hemingway the Nobel Prize.

What was it like to be Ernest Hemingway? For all the worldly success, the adulation and adventuring, the boozing and braggadocio, the fact that his sense of himself was cocked on a hair trigger must have kept him in a permanent state of terror until he could take it no longer and put that shotgun to his head. He kept up the facade of the hairy-chested artist for as long as he was able, but at the last, even golden youths lose their glister and must come to dust. Perhaps there are still burly types out there who take comfort and encouragement from the example of a life lived to the full, in the world and in the study, and if so, good luck to them. Their exemplar was less fortunate than they. ■

BACK TO THE GARDEN

The elusiveness of Joni Mitchell

by RACHEL SYME

Sometimes I think about Joni Mitchell in her long green velvet dress, 25 years old, sitting on a squat beige cushion on national television, her cheek cradled in her palm. It is August 1969. Mitchell is squeezed between Dick Cavett and Stephen Stills in a staged campfire circle of musicians that also includes her friend and early producer David Crosby and the members of Jefferson Airplane. She is silently seething. Her smile is pleasant enough, and she puts up with Cavett's hokey quips about Canada ("But we're still here to the south of you, protecting your border"), but it's her glazed-over stare that says it all: Everyone else has just dropped in straight from Woodstock, some with mud from Max Yasgur's farm still stuck to the cuffs of their jeans.

Reckless Daughter
A Portrait of Joni Mitchell
By David Yaffe
Sarah Crichton Books. 448 pp. $28

Mitchell had been invited to perform at the festival, but her agent, David Geffen, took one look at a news report of wet sludge and wild rumpus and decided that Mitchell should stay in the city so as not to miss her television debut. Meanwhile, the members of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young chartered a helicopter, played at Woodstock, and returned in time to make the Cavett show and regale the audience with dispatches from the revels. As David Yaffe writes in *Reckless Daughter*, a new biography of Mitchell, "Joni managed to play four songs and chime in when she could about the virtues of Pierre Trudeau or share her views on astrology (she noted that Crosby, a Leo, looked like a lion), but mostly she had to sit back and hear war stories about the event she'd missed."

And yet, despite having heard only secondhand tales about Woodstock, or perhaps because she experienced it that way, Mitchell would go on to write the most emblematic song about the festival, sitting alone in her hotel room watching the young people roll around in the grass on TV. Mitchell started performing "Woodstock" shortly after her Cavett appearance; her song was a lament, grieving for a halcyon time that was already beginning to slip away. The song became a huge hit the following year, when Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young recorded their own anthemic version, but it was never meant as a celebratory ode. When Mitchell sings about being "stardust" and needing to "get ourselves back to the garden," there's a patina of cynicism to the whole affair; she can't get back to the garden because she was never there. She knew that the experience could be lost, because she'd already had to sit it out and felt the lacuna. As Yaffe writes of the song, "It is purgation. It is an omen that something very, very bad will happen when the mud dries and the hippies go home. That garden they had to get back to—it was an illusion. It must have been lonely for Joni. She was the only one who could see it."

Being the person perched outside the window can be the loneliest place in the world. And yet it is here that Mitchell, now 73, has seemed most comfortable throughout her long career; she is at peace when floating through the membranes. Her voice used to do it, at least before the cigarettes blackened her lungs. Always bob-

Rachel Syme is a writer whose work has appeared in The New Yorker, The New York Times, *and the* New Republic, *where she is the television critic. She is currently writing a book for Random House.*

bing above, Mitchell has posited herself, as she did in "Woodstock," as the woman lingering at the edge of the action. "I'm just living on nerves and feelings," she sang on "People's Parties," from 1974's *Court and Spark*, "With a weak and a lazy mind / And coming to people's parties / Fumbling deaf, dumb, and blind."

Of course, in order to really float above it all, you cannot be pinned down, and people (fans, critics, biographers) have been trying to pin Mitchell down since she was a young art-school dropout from Saskatoon singing in Detroit clubs. They have been trying to stick her emotions to their own ribs like a lepidopterist pinning butterflies to a board, claiming her own words as theirs and then becoming alienated after Mitchell dived so deep into her experimental jazz and polyrhythms that they couldn't easily suction themselves to her poetic vision. In a 1979 interview with Cameron Crowe in *Rolling Stone*—the first she'd granted to the magazine after it had snarkily labeled her the "Queen of El Lay" in 1971, with a map of her romantic liaisons—Mitchell said: "If I experience any frustration, it's the frustration of being misunderstood. But that's what stardom is—a glamorous misunderstanding."

Yaffe had intermittent access to Mitchell and her milieu throughout the writing of his book, and he has given us the best chronicle to date of Mitchell's creative process and the specific way her songs were composed. He is especially good on her unique tuning methodology and her myriad influences, from classical composers to the swingy American Songbook. He breaks down her songs in encyclopedic detail, from inspiration to cultural reception to the intimate moments of their composition. But one has to wonder how much of *Reckless Daughter* would feel like yet another glamorous misunderstanding to the artist. Mitchell has said in many interviews that she longs for the kind of creative carte blanche that she sees afforded to her artistic equals (Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, Picasso—it is worth noting that Mitchell almost always lists men as her artistic equals), and Yaffe's deep study does contain a new level of granular, obsessive analysis that treats her songwriting as great art. Yet many of the passages in Yaffe's book read like a swoony valentine to Mitchell, or at least to the effect that her music can have on the spirit.

Like so many who have fallen under her music's spell, Yaffe has idolized Mitchell since he was a teenager—a time when her voice sounds particularly potent, lasering through permeable emotional states—and his eternal fondness underscores the narrative. Mitchell once compared herself to "a cellophane wrapper on a pack of cigarettes," a quote she likely regretted the moment it appeared in print. Too many people have tried to see through her, not realizing—as Mitchell would herself discover—that the best way to understand something is often to view it obliquely. The best poems and songs about Woodstock weren't, after all, written by those who were there.

Yaffe, a professor of humanities at Syracuse University, begins his book by detailing every entertainment journalist's dream, which turned quickly into a nightmare: In 2007, *The New York Times* sent him to Los Angeles to interview Mitchell, and he gained an enviable degree of access to the singer. They ate Italian food at a Brentwood restaurant that allowed Mitchell to chain-smoke on the premises; they drank Château Margaux back in her den; she delivered "Dorothy Parker–like zingers" about ballet and the environmental apocalypse and Dylan and Debussy (which, according to Yaffe, "she pronounced 'De-Boosie'").

Then his piece came out, and she hated it. "I got bitched out by Joni Mitchell!" Yaffe writes. She called, furious at his use of the term "middle class" to describe her home. "I don't know what *you* think of as middle-class," she scowled. "But I live in a mansion, my property has many rooms, I have Renaissance antiques." He quickly told her that he should have used the word "earthy" instead, adding, "If I could substitute the word now I would."

But it was too late. "She was so disappointed in me," Yaffe writes. "She had thought I was different, somehow better than the others. Now I was the *worst*." Much later, in 2014, a friend urged Mitchell to speak with Yaffe again, and she relented, allowing him to capture several hours of musings on tape. It was a few months before she suffered a brain aneurysm, which, along with debilitating Morgellons disease, has kept Mitchell largely out of the public eye ever since.

Despite the dressing-down, Yaffe seems to have remained starstruck. "You can always flip the record, put in another CD, reset the iPod. Close your eyes. Joni Mitchell will be there waiting for you," he writes. For Yaffe, Mitchell has never lost her glamour, even when she was openly resistant to being comprehended. This leads him to read her work, often line by line, with great tenderness, but it is also clear that he is writing under the influence of dazzle, and he is particularly defensive of Mitchell's later jazz work (which stymied critics at the time of its release) and of her push-pull with the media, the record business, and in later years her daughter, whom Mitchell gave up for adoption in 1965, when she was still living in Canada, and reunited with only in 1997.

Yaffe ends his book by referencing "The Circle Game," one of Mitchell's early songs, writing: "So many years ago, the words she wrote as a young woman, sung at so many summer camps and quoted in so many high school yearbooks, were truer than ever. We're captive on the carousel of time." He has tried to graft her early words onto her later life, which, while poetic in its way, is exactly the kind of linear reading that Mitchell has been sidewinding to evade since she became famous.

In a 1982 interview with *New Musical Express*, Mitchell said there was always something empty to her about this kind of broad paean. "If your self-esteem is at a low ebb and you're being showered with affection, it seems out of whack. It's like someone you feel nothing for telling you they love you.... I just couldn't get used to people sucking in their breath when I walked by. But I insist on my right to move about the world, and I go a lot of places by myself—as a writer you have to."

Mitchell would never have written "Woodstock" had she gone to the festival; nor would she have composed "Little Green" if she hadn't given up her child, or many of the mournful tunes on *Blue* if she hadn't loved and lost, clung to and escaped from. She had to move through the world to write about it. Growing up in Alberta, where she was born Roberta Joan Anderson in 1943, Mitchell suffered from polio and so began singing and painting in her solitude. Her work forever after was sealed to her lonesomeness, but not, she insists, as so many have written, to an innate softness. It was strength that pulled her through the illness, and it was this strength that she retained.

If anything, her gradual hardening over the years is a result of so many praising her for being pliable—she may have run headlong into jazz because after *Blue*, she said, "people started calling me confessional, and then it was like a blood sport. I felt like people were coming to watch me fall off a tightrope or something." Yaffe notes an encounter that Mitchell had with Kris Kristofferson in which he advised her to "save something for yourself"; she was giving too much away. "The vulnerability freaked them out," Mitchell said of those around her.

There is a part of Yaffe's narrative that still feels freaked out, or at least deeply invested in Mitchell's most cellophane period. He rhapsodizes about *Blue*, still her most lauded album, with a delicate sweetness: "It's the feeling underneath the tears, before the tears, the surge and the power of heartbreak that Joni has captured so masterfully in her work. This is the Joni Mitchell that her listeners would want, frozen in vocal leaps, emotional depths, passionate, sultry, full of memories, but in absolute possession of them. This is a beautiful woman who is sensitive, sensuous, and fully attuned to experience, yet somehow beyond heartbreak."

And indeed, this Mitchell—the pretty California blonde with the tuning-fork mind and the plaintive voice of an ancient siren—is, it seems, the Mitchell that her listeners (and her biographers) will always affix themselves to, despite her endless attempts to evolve. This was also the Mitchell that '90s babies like me grew up on as the result of a Lilith Fair–ish revival of her stripped-down earlier work. We drove down highways listening to "Cactus Tree," a song about never quite settling down, and felt that it mirrored, in some deep and cosmic way, the alienation we were experiencing as we started to plug into our new, more adult lives—but also to detach from one another.

No aspect of Mitchell's work has been more glorified than the poetry of her aloofness, her ease with picking up and lighting out on her own. *Reckless Daughter* tries to travel with her. It is a balanced contextualization of Mitchell's life from both sides. It chronicles her ill-fated first marriage, to Chuck Mitchell, a man who never really understood her voice and was resentful of her ability to use it, and it doesn't shy away from the complex struggles that Mitchell went through when reuniting later in life with her adult daughter, Kilauren. Yaffe also doesn't tiptoe around Mitchell's complicated (and sometimes downright offensive) attitude toward race—such as her decision to appear on the cover of *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* in blackface, or her statement that she'd like to open her memoirs with the line "I was the only black man at the party." But overall, Yaffe's narrative still tilts toward a depiction of Mitchell as the romantic heroine, excluded from the gang but able to capture its spirit better than anyone.

Mitchell has said, many times and in many interviews, that she cannot stand any art that doesn't shock her with newness, that the quality she most admires in anyone is invention. "I'm born in the Day of the Discoverer in the Week of Depth," she once told a reporter, referring to her star chart. "I really love innovators. I love the first guy to put the flag at the North Pole; the guy who went there second doesn't interest me a lot of times."

Many people went to Woodstock; Mitchell was the first to mine it for material. Perhaps because she always remained on the margins, it was her absence from the festival that made the song so perceptive. And it's certainly what makes writing about her songs with any sense of distance so difficult. Her words are so intuitive, her translations of emotion into song so instinctive, that it's easy to want to read her life with an equal desire to untangle her technique and remain mystified by it. Mitchell is brilliant and yet opaque. She is an explorer of new frontiers, and yet her admirers have, since her first records, longed to hold her back, to protect the Mitchell they thought they knew. But Mitchell's voice keeps changing, and so does her legacy. Yaffe's biography—chronological and lashed to the songs as it is—doesn't feel like it reaches as far into the horizon as her songwriting. Mitchell has said, more than once, that she intends one day to write her own memoirs. So perhaps, as she has always done, she will have to make the maiden voyage herself. ■

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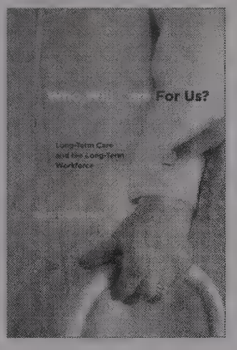

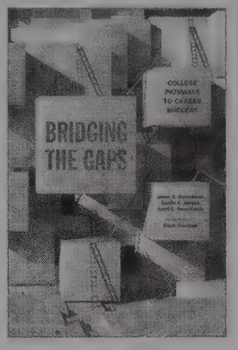

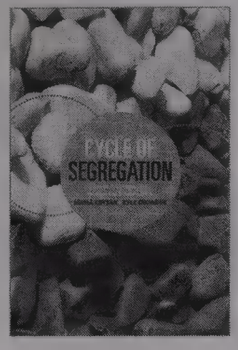

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RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION

Law's Idealist

Owen Fiss's new book examines the tensions between constitutional ideals and the brute facts of political reality

by DAVID COLE

The great civil-rights lawyer Bryan Stevenson tells a story of his grandmother warning him, upon finding young Bryan hanging out with some of the neighborhood's less savory characters, that he will be judged "by the company you keep." In *Pillars of Justice*, Owen Fiss, a legendary Yale law professor, reflects on the company he has kept, offering discerning profiles of the lawyers and scholars he's worked with and admired over the course of his 50-year career. Some were mentors, others colleagues, one a student—all close friends. From these spare and elegant profiles emerges a collective portrait of greatness in the law and, more particularly, of Fiss's conception of what makes law great. In an era when lawyers are often condemned as hired guns, and law is often dismissed as little more than politics in disguise, Fiss's collection provides a welcome counterpoint by reminding us that law, pursued in the interests of justice rather than material interest or self-aggrandizement, can be a noble profession.

Some of those profiled here are household names: US Supreme Court Justices Thurgood Marshall and William Brennan, Israeli Supreme Court Justice Aharon Barak. Others are widely known in the legal academy, if not outside: Harry Kalven, a First Amendment scholar at the University of Chicago; Morton Horwitz, a legal historian at Harvard Law School; Joseph Goldstein, a Yale law professor who pioneered the field of law and psychoanalysis; and Catharine

Pillars of Justice
Lawyers and the Liberal Tradition
By Owen Fiss
Harvard University Press. 224 pp. $27.95

David Cole is national legal director of the ACLU and the author of Engines of Liberty: The Power of Citizen Activists to Make Constitutional Law.

ILLUSTRATION BY **TIM ROBINSON**

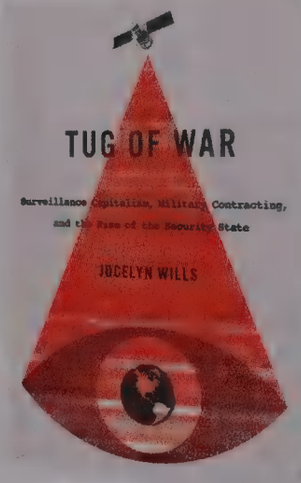
MacKinnon, a professor at the University of Michigan Law School who introduced the concept of sexual harassment to the law (and, much less successfully, sought to give women the right to sue pornographers for their objectified depictions of women's bodies). Others are civil-rights and human-rights lawyers, including Burke Marshall and John Doar, both of whom worked in the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, and Carlos Nino, an Argentine lawyer who helped bring military leaders to justice for "disappearing" thousands of people in that country's "dirty war" in the 1970s.

The essays reflect Fiss's deep appreciation for what these people offered him, intellectually and emotionally. Some focus on the lawyers' work or the scholars' substantive areas of inquiry. Some are both personal and political; the chapter on MacKinnon, for example, canvasses her enormous influence on the law of sex discrimination, but also her influence on Fiss himself. Inspired by MacKinnon, Fiss began teaching a course on law and feminism, the only one on the subject that was offered by Yale in the 1980s.

Taken together, these essays offer readers a view of constitutional and civil-rights law as a forum for articulating the nation's most fundamental values; for enforcing those ideals when the political branches are not up to doing so; and for pursuing justice through the application of reasoned judgment. Today, too many lawyers—professors and practitioners alike—reject this approach as naive and overly idealistic; they view law more cynically as just a tool of political action, no different from any other. In this book, Fiss offers concrete evidence, drawn from the lives of others, that this cynicism is not warranted.

Fiss's career, like his book, has been defined by a commitment to civil rights and to the role of the courts in advancing social justice. He was born and raised in the Bronx, and his legal and academic work has always focused on how constitutional law can bring equality to the disadvantaged. Fiss's interest in law and the part it can play in furthering liberal causes developed early: On a trip to Washington as a high-school student in the 1950s, he recalls seeing Thurgood Marshall arguing *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark school-desegregation case. After attending Dartmouth College, Oxford University, and Harvard Law School, Fiss clerked for both Marshall and Brennan, probably the two greatest civil-rights justices on the Supreme Court. As a young lawyer, he turned to the Justice Department, where he worked on civil-rights enforcement, before becoming a law professor, first at the University of Chicago in 1968 and then at Yale in 1974. In his many years at Yale, he has defended a robust role for the courts in giving public meaning to constitutional rights and in imposing structural reform on bureaucracies that infringe on the most basic of these: liberty, privacy, autonomy, and—above all—equality.

Fiss's conception of constitutional law was forged by the Warren Court, which became known for dismantling Jim Crow, applying constitutional limits to state government that had previously been applied only to the federal government, and expanding safeguards for the rights of criminal defendants. Fiss sees adjudication not merely as an arena for resolving private disputes, but also as a forum for explicating the nation's highest ideals. He defends what others deride as "judicial activism" as an essential element of a constitutional legal system. Where others taught the first-year law-school course on "Civil Procedure" as a primer on how to file and litigate lawsuits, Fiss reimagined it as a way to explore the most elemental questions of social justice, asking how different procedural rules would advance



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or obstruct the ability of courts to remedy society's most systemic ills. For him, there wasn't much question that judges had a responsibility to reform institutions that failed to meet constitutional demands; the only question was how we ought to formulate these rules in order to give judges the means to pursue justice and protect the vulnerable.

Some of the most interesting chapters in *Pillars of Justice* reprise arguments that, one suspects, Fiss has been pursuing with colleagues in law-school hallways for many decades. One frequent interlocutor is Horwitz, the Harvard legal historian. The two were classmates at Stuyvesant High School in New York City; in fact, they were on the same trip to Washington and together watched Marshall arguing *Brown*. Horwitz and Fiss, one senses, have been debating ever since what that case means for our understanding of law and social change more generally. Horwitz, one of the founders of the Critical Legal Studies movement, takes a fundamentally historicist view of law and sees legal decisions, including *Brown*, as a product of multiple contingent social and political forces. For Fiss, by contrast, *Brown* was not an accident of history, but rather the product of justices engaged in reasoned elaboration of our nation's most fundamental values. Horwitz insists that law is one of the many channels through which politics operates, and not one from which we should necessarily expect justice. Fiss takes the opposite view: that law is a forum of principle, which at its best gives public and concrete meaning to our nation's most enduring ideals.

Another chapter details a related debate that Fiss has had with Robert Cover, his colleague at Yale, who also took a darker view of judges and law. Whereas Fiss saw the judiciary as "a tribune of public reason," Cover "increasingly emphasized its violent nature," coining the term "jurispathic" to suggest that judging is not so much an expression of reasoned discourse as the naked assertion of authority to end—or kill—debate. Whereas Fiss viewed judges as leaders in our great moral dialogues, Cover saw them as obstructionists who impeded those debates.

In a sense, Horwitz and Cover are both right: Legal decisions are very much a product of history, and the power of judges stems from their authority to enforce their decrees, not from the brilliance of their capacity to reason about political principles. But as Fiss contends, we vest judges with the power to decide deeply contested issues only on the condition that they do so through a commitment to the reasoned articulation of fundamental constitutional values. They must seek to implement those values, not personal preferences. If the courts get that wrong, Fiss maintains, they can lose their legitimacy. And while, as a formal matter, judges can compel obedience to their orders, their real authority ultimately depends not just on coercion, but also on principle and persuasion. The best judges and lawyers understand that the appeal to public reason is essential to continuing the enterprise of constitutional law. In his book, Fiss celebrates those who shared and lived that vision. But at the same time, he gives equal space to those with whom he has disagreed, reflecting his genuine appreciation of scholars who offer careful and thoughtful critiques of that vision.

The tension between the ideals outlined in the Constitution and the brute facts of political reality runs through much of Fiss's career, which began during the Warren era but ran parallel to more than four decades of a conservative-majority Supreme Court. Nowhere is this captured more poignantly than in one of his most influential ar-

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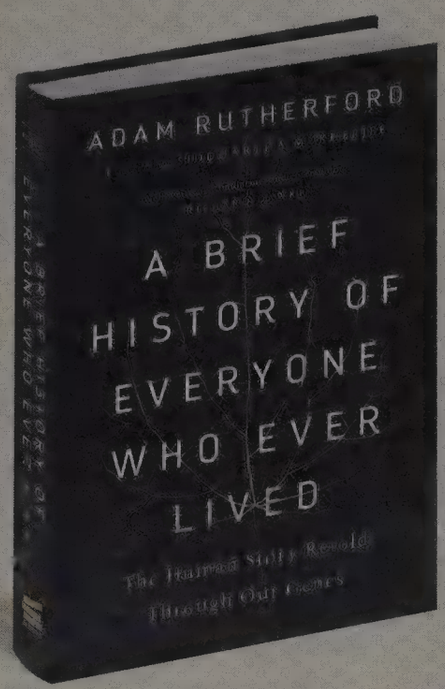

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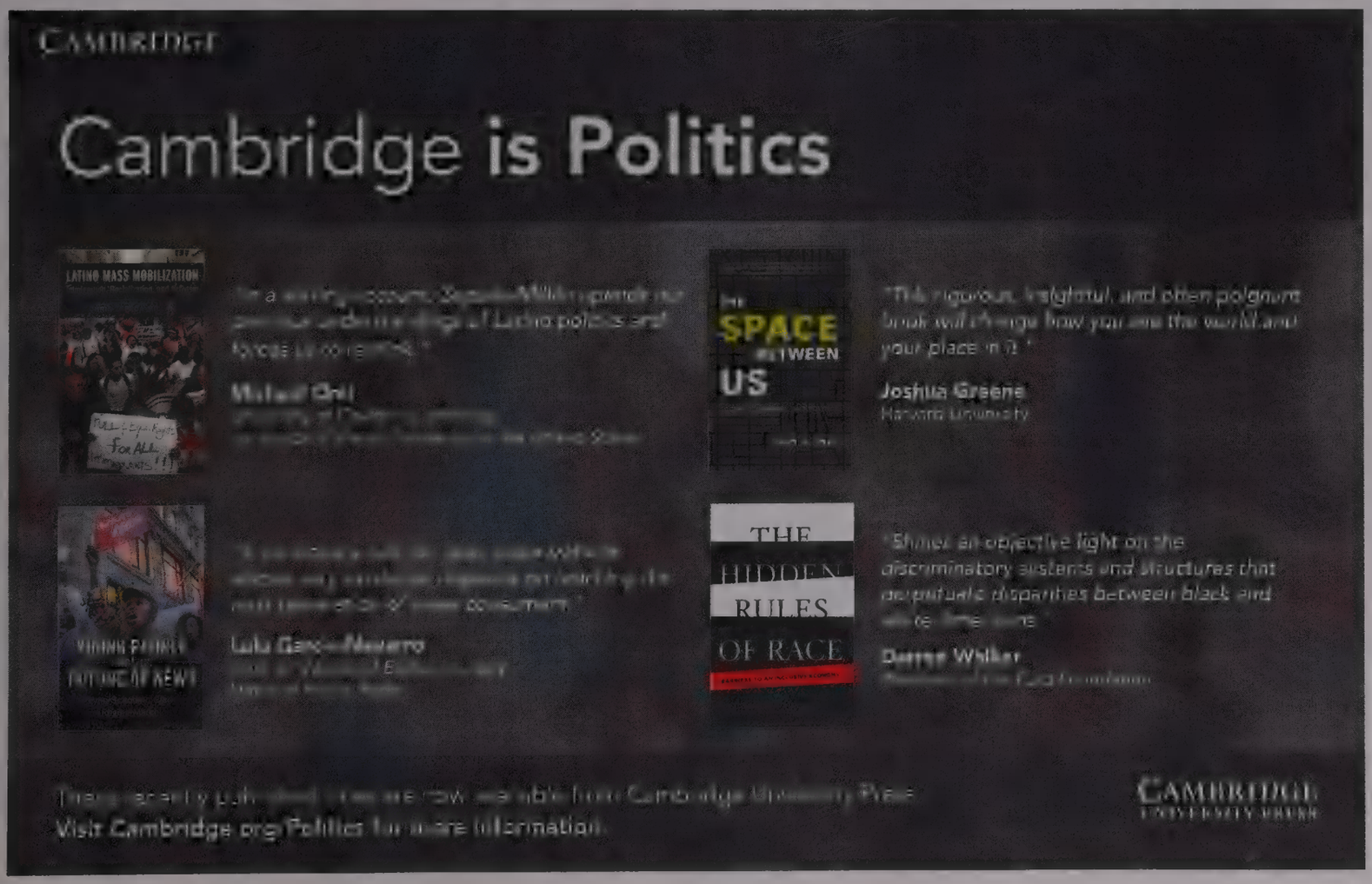
ticles, "Groups and the Equal Protection Clause," published in 1976 in *Philosophy & Public Affairs*. In it, Fiss argues that the 14th Amendment's equal-protection clause establishes an "ethical view against caste"—and, in particular, against the subordination of African Americans. Fiss contends that because the clause was born of an effort to redress slavery and its effects, we should understand it not as insisting on anodyne color blindness, but as a command to combat practices that maintain a perpetual underclass. On this view, the clause would prohibit not only laws and practices intended to harm African Americans but also those that have that effect, regardless of intent. Based on this reading of the amendment, affirmative action would be not only permissible but required as long as racial subordination remained a reality.

The Supreme Court has long rejected this approach, insisting instead on reading the clause as requiring color blindness; conservatives then use this reading to challenge affirmative-action programs designed to help African Americans. Part of the Court's reluctance to accept Fiss's vision is the sheer difficulty of implementing such a mandate: So many laws and practices have disparate effects on African Americans that the judiciary would potentially be supervising and seeking to eliminate racial disparities in vast swaths of society. Calibrating and measuring that intervention would be challenging, moreover, because the equal treatment of "groups" is much more difficult to define than the equal treatment of individuals. In a world shot through with disparities, which ones demand judicial redress?

These concerns about the institutional capacity of courts are not wholly unwarranted. But they have led the Supreme Court to limit its intervention on this subject to laws that intentionally discriminate on the basis of race, leaving unaddressed the structural racism that continues to relegate most African Americans to the underclass. The anger and frustration reflected in, for example, Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me* is a result. Injustice unaddressed remains an open wound, and until we address it, the constitutional promise of equality remains hollow. In Fiss's constitutional world, the courts would be dedicated to solving this problem, not resigned to tolerating it.

I was a student of Fiss's in my first year in law school. To a young and deeply skeptical student, he communicated a passion for law's potential as an engine of social justice that has inspired me throughout my career—even as I, like Fiss, have been confronted again and again by a Supreme Court very different from the Warren Court. I am not alone, either: Fiss's influence can be found throughout the legal and academic world. Some of the nation's leading scholars and civil-rights advocates have been inspired and influenced by him, even as he was shaped by the people he writes about in *Pillars of Justice*.

Fiss's vision, refracted in this book through the portraits of others, is idealistic in both senses of the word: It appeals to what is best in us, and it is also unrealistic. Fiss fully recognizes the tension, and he has spent his career arguing with colleagues and students about the necessity of confronting and resolving it—not by condemning law's reality, but by appealing to its possibilities. Owen Fiss has no doubt about where law's greatness lies: in the attempt to articulate and implement the ideal of justice in the face of very real challenges. Now, more than ever, that vision is under attack. Now, more than ever, it is precisely what is needed. ■



If Only...

Hillary Clinton's account of the election tells us more about her than about why she lost

by ELIZABETH DREW

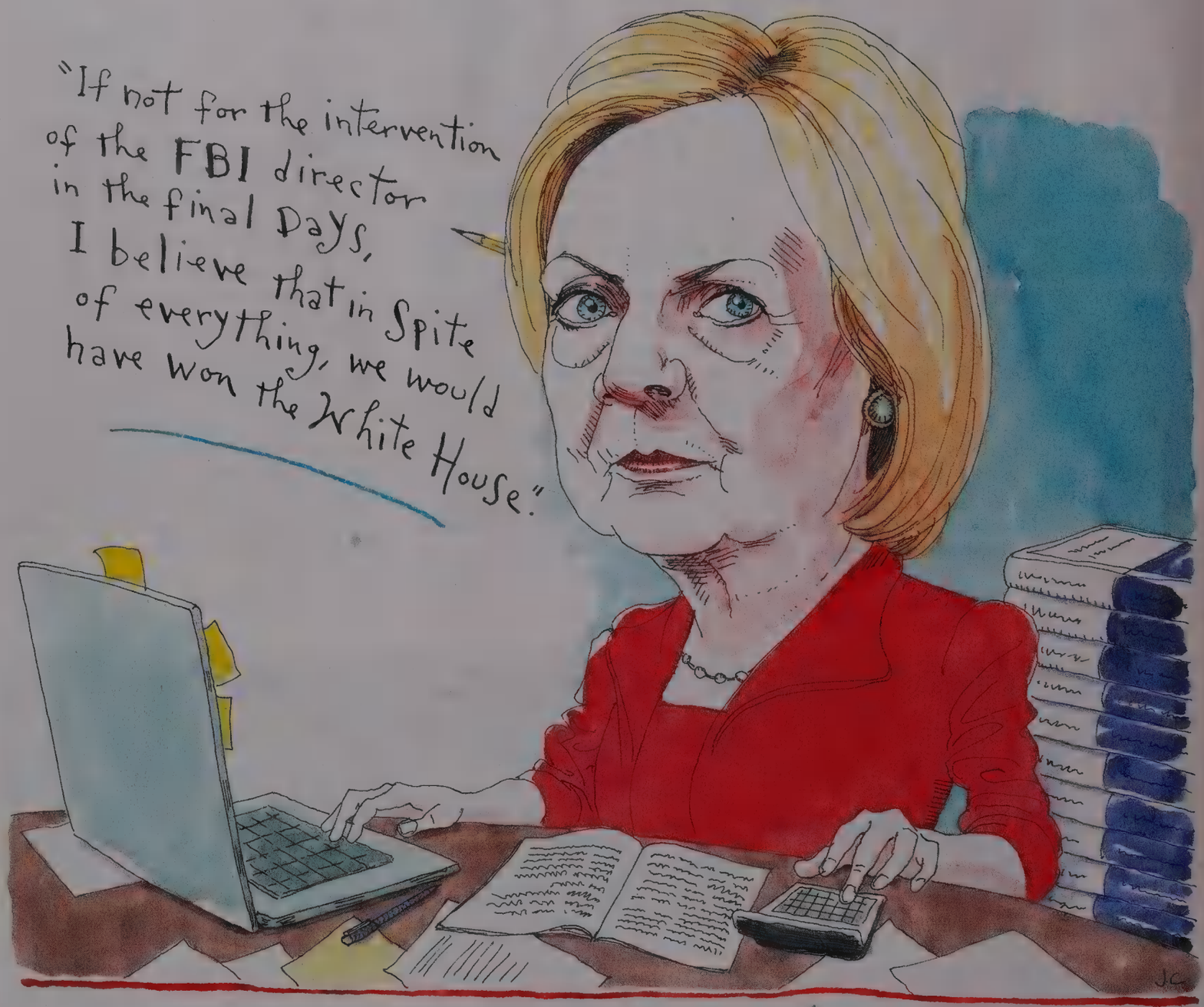

"If not for the intervention of the FBI director in the final Days, I believe that in Spite of everything, we would have won the White House."

ILLUSTRATION BY **JOE CIARDIELLO**

Some time ago, I called on Murray Chotiner, Richard Nixon's first political mentor and storied practitioner of dirty tricks. (In Nixon's 1950 run for US Senate against the liberal actress and activist Helen Gahagan Douglas, Nixon's campaign printed her voting record on pink paper, earning the future president the sobriquet "Tricky Dick.") Chotiner, whom the Nixon people had stashed away in an office in the East Wing to keep him out of sight, told me: "I always tell my clients, 'If you're going to lose, lose big.'"

The point, of course, was that the losing candidate would then be spared the torment of "If-onlys..." Hillary Clinton didn't manage to elude Chotiner's law. And so, for her, her squeaker of a loss to Donald Trump last fall had to be explained—to contemporaries and to the future. The resulting book, *What Happened*, is a number of things, but its underlying themes are Clinton's "If-onlys" and the many frustrations of being a presidential candidate, especially for a woman. It is also a book that's born of the pain of losing a presidential election, a pain that's difficult for others to fathom. One has let down dedicated aides and allies and millions of supporters. One has put oneself out there, exhausted oneself, and struggled to contend with the uncontrollable—an unexpected event, an effective surprise attack by the opponent, a slip of the tongue after long days on the high wire, and a press corps that's all too likely to blow something out of proportion.

Some defeated presidential candidates never get over it. Clinton is still in the pro-

What Happened
By Hillary Rodham Clinton
Simon & Schuster. 512 pp. $30

Elizabeth Drew is a DC-based journalist and the author of Washington Journal: Reporting Watergate and Richard Nixon's Downfall.

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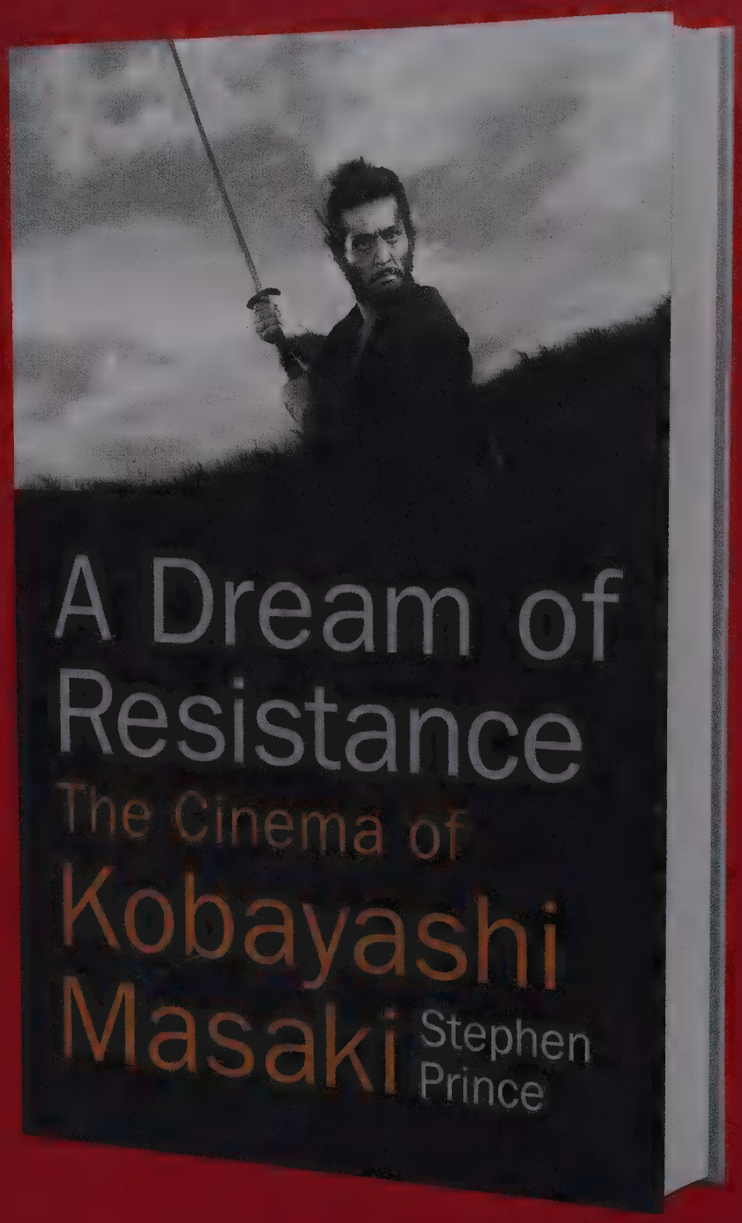

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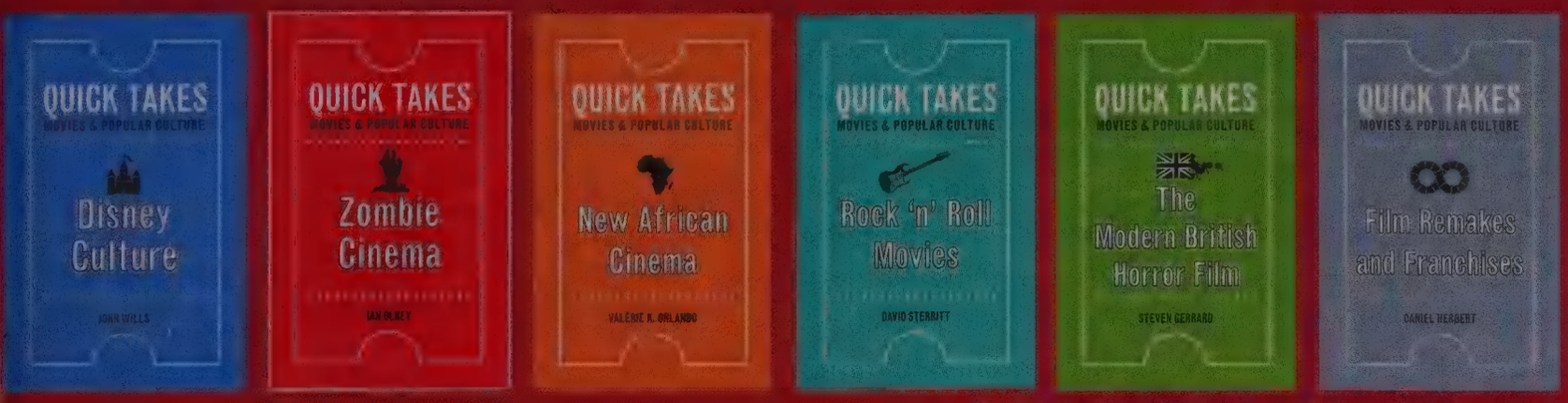

Quick Takes: Movies and Popular Culture

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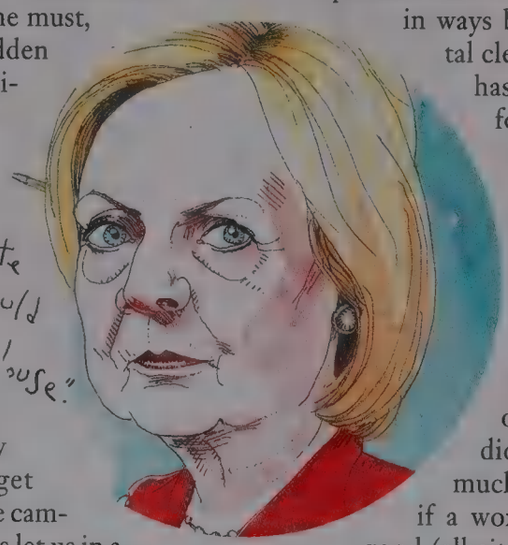
cess of working through her loss. Though she says that she has accepted it and has moved on, the book reads as a refutation of that claim. Her defeat in 2016 may have been one of the most painful a presidential candidate has had to endure: Not only did she fall short of the nearly universal expectation that she would win, but her loss delivered the country into the hands of the most unfit person ever to occupy the Oval Office.

What Happened is actually two books: a book about the campaign and another about the personal aspects of being a woman in politics, in particular being Hillary Clinton reaching for the top. It's as if, at some point, Clinton was advised that the story of the election alone wouldn't interest enough people, since so much of it was familiar, and so she chose to begin her account with a section that's ostensibly about more private matters, which could be titled "Humanizing Hillary."

With one exception in the chapters about the election itself, I found the first part of her book the more interesting one. In it, Clinton is more candid about her weaknesses and frustrations than we're accustomed to hearing from her. But as for the book overall, much of it is still very familiar, part of which is inevitable: Hillary addresses, as she must, the already well-trodden ground of having a private server for her State Department e-mails, but she also returns to oft-told anecdotes, such as the one about her mother instructing her to go back out and confront the neighborhood bully.



In recounting how she managed to get through each day on the campaign trail, Clinton does let us in a bit more than she has in the past. It was of interest to read how she accomplished what at times seemed almost superhuman—getting herself together each morning, preparing physically and mentally to go out and do battle—and how she unwound each evening. It was a routine that took incredible discipline and determination. (Yoga helped.) Clinton makes a persuasive case for how much more complicated public appearances are for women than they are for men; she calculates that getting her hair and makeup done came to "about six hundred hours, or twenty-five days" of the campaign. She tells us that she talked to Bill on the phone every night before she went to sleep—really? Every night?—but even discounting the possible exaggeration, the statement captures just how close the Clintons are, despite their highly publicized marital troubles.

Clinton devotes an entire chapter to the frustrations of being a woman in politics. She found it difficult, she writes, to talk about this during the campaign: "I never figured out how to tell this story right. I didn't want people to see me as the 'woman candidate,' which I find limiting, but rather as the best candidate whose experience as a woman in a male-dominated culture made her sharper, tougher, and more competent." This proved "a hard distinction to draw," Clinton explains, "and I wasn't confident that I had the dexterity to pull it off." She also "never felt that the American electorate [was] receptive to [it]."

A number of pages are devoted to the frustrations of being a public woman in general, and though her situation was unique, she speaks for many women who have tried to function in what had long been considered a "man's world." "Sexism," she notes, "exerts its pull on our politics and our society every day, in ways both subtle and crystal clear." Any woman who hasn't been in a convent for the past several decades can readily attest to that. Much has changed with the larger numbers of young women entering the workforce every year, but for many of their elders, things didn't change all that much: As Clinton notes, if a woman is strong, that's good (albeit not with all men); if she's too strong, then she becomes "overbearing" or even "strident" (has a man ever been accused of being strident?); and if she doggedly pursues a point, she's "shrill" (has a man ever been called shrill?). On the subject of sexism, Clinton's important contribution is to point out that even the most successful woman in public life, or perhaps in the world, encounters many of the same difficulties that other women out in the world do; only hers have played out on a larger, more brightly lit stage.

Hillary the author, like Hillary the candidate, indulges in more than a little self-pity. She complains about the criticism that she's too remote from the public. She interprets this as meaning that her critics think she should reveal more about herself. She doesn't seem to get that she can come across as sealed off by layers of caginess, self-protectiveness, and caution, with a tincture of arrogance. (She knows she's special.) Partly what bewilders her is that when she's not onstage, she can be funny, fun-loving, thoughtful, and warm—when she chooses to be; otherwise, wearing a puffer coat in her presence might be advisable.

Clinton spends some time in her book telling us that she cannot understand why she's considered "divisive." She says she's at a loss to understand it; a lot of people would be astonished that the uniformly confident-appearing Clinton is ever at a loss. She tends to meet the world with her dukes up. (Perhaps she overlearned the lesson her mother taught her about self-defense.) Hillary writes that when a woman "lands a political punch," she's considered a "nasty woman." I haven't heard others engaged in political argument talk about "landing a punch"—they've "scored a point" or "won that one"—and it's not a surrender of a woman's independence or self-respect to recognize that a certain modulation may be in order. Clinton recognizes that "the issues of authenticity and likability had an impact on the most consequential election of our lifetimes," and understandably, it frustrates her that in this most consequential election, the candidate who employed "crude, abusive, fact-free rhetoric was characterized as authentic."

While it was widely assumed that a female candidate would draw unusually strong support from women, Clinton says she didn't expect to do better with women than men, which is quite an admission. Moreover, she tries to pull a fast one by saying that if women voted their gender, "We'd probably have had a woman president or two by now, don't you think?" This statement is disingenuous: If numerous women had previously had the opportunity and been blessed with the talent, confidence, and sheer willpower to run for president, then Clinton would be unexceptional and there'd be little point to this book at all. She doesn't mind pointing out that she did better than Barack Obama had with white women.

Clinton also describes herself as puzzled by the question of why so many people who she needed to vote for her didn't. Too many people who should have known better

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thought that it didn't matter who won the election, or that Clinton would be the inevitable winner, so why bother to stand in line at the polls? And a significant number of Bernie Sanders supporters didn't find her "pure" enough (a view that Sanders encouraged). In the end, not enough Democrats were drawn enough to her to bestir themselves on behalf of her candidacy, and this was near-fatal. It is also probably the hardest thing to accept in politics. With all those millions of people roaring their support, why can't one reach more? In Hillary's case, something was missing. Clinton's problem wasn't just all the haters in the Republican ranks; it was that she aroused more hatred generally than most candidates do. She drew fire, and it wasn't simply because she's a woman.

When it comes to the election itself, Hillary makes clear her exasperation with Bernie Sanders. She tells us that she "found campaigning against him to be profoundly frustrating." His high-flying proposals without the means to implement them offended her "responsible" streak, and her Methodist sensibility, and as young voters flocked to him, she could only watch in annoyance. (It was also the case that Sanders's candidacy pushed her somewhat to the left: In time, she would offer watered-down versions of some of his proposals, including free college education for all.) She levels the tough charge that Sanders "didn't get into the race to make sure that a Democrat won the White House, he got in to disrupt the Democratic Party"; but it is fair to say that after Sanders finally got out of the race, he didn't evince a whole lot of passion for her to win. He and his followers were less generous to Clinton at the Democratic National Convention than Clinton and her followers were to Obama in 2008. Sanders, as Clinton notes in her book, was grudging all the way.

Hillary clearly remains bothered by the charge that she didn't understand or address the economic anxieties of the working class. She maintains that while she grasps the struggle that so many blue-collar workers have endured, she was inhibited from talking about it in her campaign because Obama was still in the White House. Perhaps. (At another point, she says this was also why she couldn't be the candidate of "change," that overworked and largely meaningless term that many candidates run on as if they're saying something of substance. But, in fact, it's usually the opposition party's province to make that claim.) Clinton points out that Trump didn't originate the idea of a Republican going after working-class voters—using race as bait for angry white Americans—and reminds her readers of the "Reagan Democrats." In fact, it goes back even further: Richard Nixon's "silent majority" was the same group.

Clinton also defensively disputes the charge that she didn't spend enough time in the crucial states of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, but the blizzard of facts

Gay Bingo at the Pasadena Animal Shelter

My bingo cards are empty, because I'm not paying attention.
I can't hear the numbers, because something inward is being given substance.
Then my mother and father appear in the bingo hall and seem sad and solitary.
They are shades now, with pale skin, and have no shame showing their genitals.
This is before I am born and before a little strip of DNA—
mutated in the 30s and 40s, part-chimpanzee—overran the community
and before the friends of my youth are victims of discrimination.
I resemble my mother and father, but if you look closer,
you will see that I am different, I am Henri.
"Don't pay no mind to the haters," Mother and Father are repeating,
and I listen poignantly, not hearing the bingo numbers called.
I think maybe my real subject is language as an act of revenge
against the past:
The beach was so white; O, how the sun burned;
he loved me as I loved him, but we did what others told us
and kept our feelings hidden. Now, I make my own decisions.
I don't speak so softly. Tonight, we're raising money for the shelter animals.
The person I call myself—elegant, libidinous, austere—
is older than many buildings here, where time moves too swiftly,
taking the measure of my body, like hot sand or a hand leaving its mark,
as the bright sunlight blurs the days into one another.
Still, the sleeping heart awakens,
and, once pricked and fed, it grows plump again.

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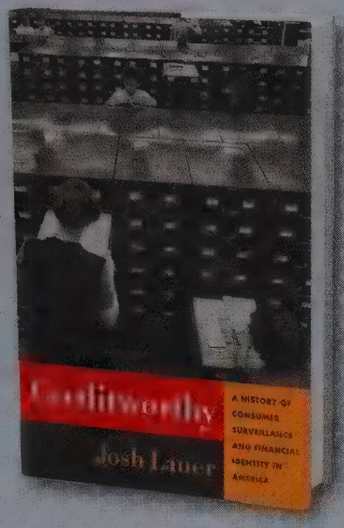

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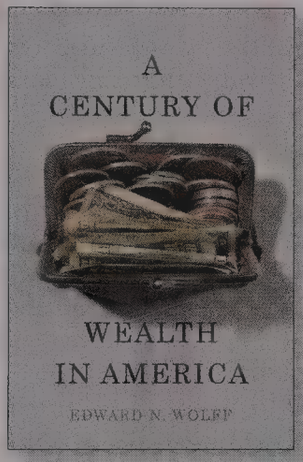

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she tosses at this argument somehow misses the point: The issue wasn't just whether she spent enough time in these states, but which audiences she addressed if she did go to them. Bill Clinton was known to call his wife's campaign headquarters to complain that her itinerary overlooked blue-collar voters, and after the election Obama noted that "there're not only entire states but also big chunks of states where, if we're not showing up, if we're not in there making an argument, then we're going to lose. And we can lose badly, and that's what happened in this election."

In defending herself, Clinton takes a swipe at Joe Biden, who after the election was openly critical of her failure to win enough working-class voters: Well, she writes archly, Biden himself campaigned plenty for her in Pennsylvania and didn't manage to deliver the state. But Biden's name wasn't on the ballot. (Perhaps explaining Clinton's loss in one of the three crucial battleground states, a recently released study suggests that Wisconsin's new voting restrictions discouraged enough minority citizens to have made the difference in the outcome there—and Clinton didn't visit during the general election.)

And then there are the e-mails. Clinton is justified in her anger and bitterness over the performance of then–FBI director James Comey. She's also justified in her anger at the role of the press in wildly inflating the issue of the private server. (NBC's Matt Lauer comes in for a particular lashing for persisting to question her about this in a candidate forum supposedly devoted to "commander in chief" issues.) But there is also the question of Clinton's judgment in the server business. She describes her decision in retrospect as "a dumb mistake," but she also tries to portray it as nothing out of the ordinary to have done. This is where her lack of self-awareness comes in: The server disclosure had resonance with many people because, as first lady, she acquired a reputation for being secretive. This isn't the only time in the book that Hillary both acknowledges making a mistake and defends the very same action. Accounts of the special arrangements that State Department aides made to accommodate her wishes on a private server conveyed one of Hillary's less attractive traits: a certain arrogance, stoked by subordinates who acted as eager enablers. But I wouldn't go as far as Clinton does in attributing her loss solely to Comey: "If not for the dramatic intervention of the FBI director in the final days," she writes, "I believe that in spite of everything, we would have won the White House." The view—widely shared by her followers—that Comey caused her defeat suggests a corollary to Chotiner's law: In a very close election in which any number of factors might have made the difference, it's extremely unlikely that any one thing caused a defeat.

Then what about Russia? In fact, Hillary blames Vladimir Putin for her loss as well. We're also still learning about Russia's extensive and disturbing effort to elect Trump. We do know that the evidence of their involvement metastasizes almost daily—who is to say that their social-media presence, in which they played on themes that were disadvantageous to Clinton, and the drip-drip-drip of WikiLeaks e-mails didn't continually reinforce people's doubts about her? In any event, given the amount of fiddling around that the Russians did, we may never know whether the 2016 election had a legitimate victor.

Hillary does do the requisite taking of responsibility in *What Happened*, but it comes off as meeting a requirement. She's aware that, unlike her husband or Obama, she has no natural gift for politics, especially the political skills required for operating at such a high level; her admission that she fell short in this regard is painful to read. But without question, her delivery improved as the campaign went along, to the point where she gave an impressive acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention and, by the end of the proceedings, came across as a plausible president. (It wasn't until election night that we learned that wasn't a requirement for winning.)

Nonetheless, Clinton's chug-chug-chug approach to politics during the election reminded me of her failure to get a health-care bill through Congress during her husband's administration: Like both her attempts at the presidency, the proposal was too complicated and mechanical, and she couldn't explain it convincingly. To have difficulty in simplifying isn't a bad trait; it's just an unfortunate one if you're in politics.

This most likely explains the mystery of why Clinton's campaign was so themeless. She defends, sort of, the inert slogan "Stronger Together" that her consultants came up with. Her husband is reported to have also complained about the campaign's lack of an engaging message, but I've wondered why he then didn't help her come up with one.

The most compelling section in this earnest, somewhat plodding book is Hillary's narrative of election night. We're in the room with her and Bill and family, at work with her speechwriters, putting the final touches on her victory speech. The first signs of trouble appear shortly after the polls close: Black and Latino votes aren't coming in for her in North Carolina and Florida as strongly as had been hoped, while the "white precincts likely to go for Trump [seem] energized." And then comes worse news: Though she has won some important states, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin are still up for grabs. That Hillary can somehow take a nap in the middle of all this is a sign of her sheer exhaustion. One of the saddest parts of this story comes earlier in the book but belongs here: Clinton had packed a white pantsuit (white being the color of women's liberation) to wear for her victory speech, but upon losing she instead donned the gray-and-purple one that she'd been planning to wear following her victory.

I wish I could say that more of the book was this riveting, but like so much else that Clinton does publicly, much of it comes across as dutiful. Sometimes the book jumps around; the fact that, by Clinton's own acknowledgment, so many people had a hand in writing it can partly explain why it lacks a clear, consistent voice—much as her campaign did. For all of Clinton's efforts to tell us about her life and how she felt about losing, we're still left with a somewhat waxen figure. I can't blame Hillary for refusing to invade her own privacy more, but her inability to connect with enough voters had consequences. Some readers may be put off by her defensiveness and complaining—even if Clinton does have reason to complain. Still, in the end, *she* lost the election. While she says that she understands this, it's not clear that she does. ■

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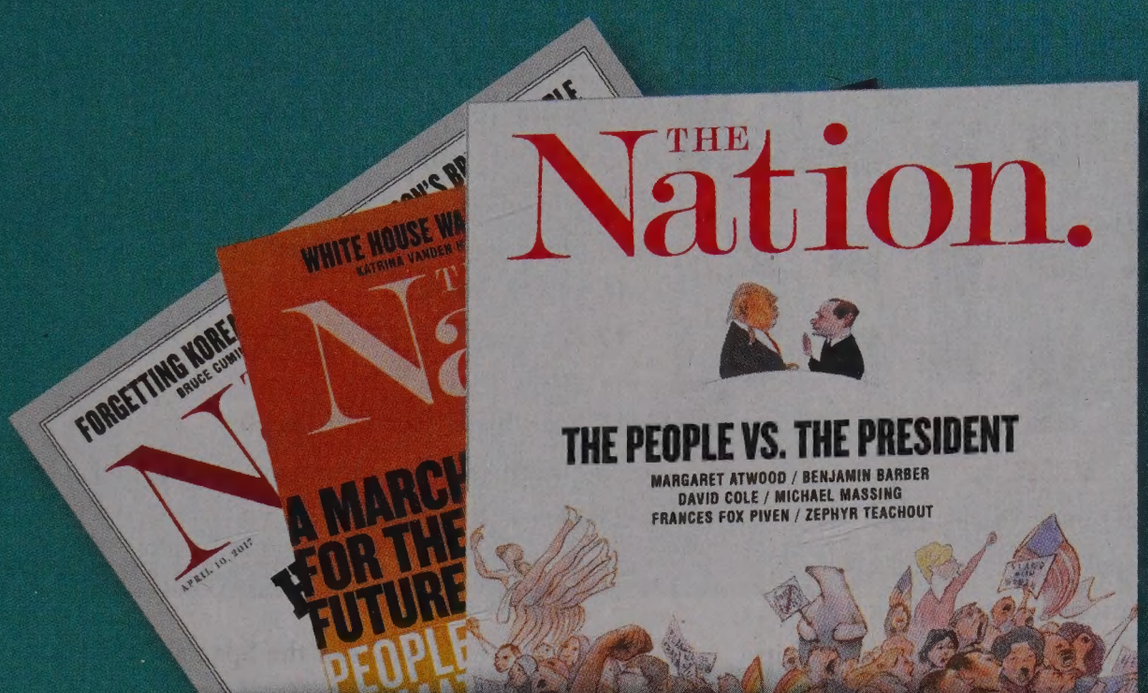

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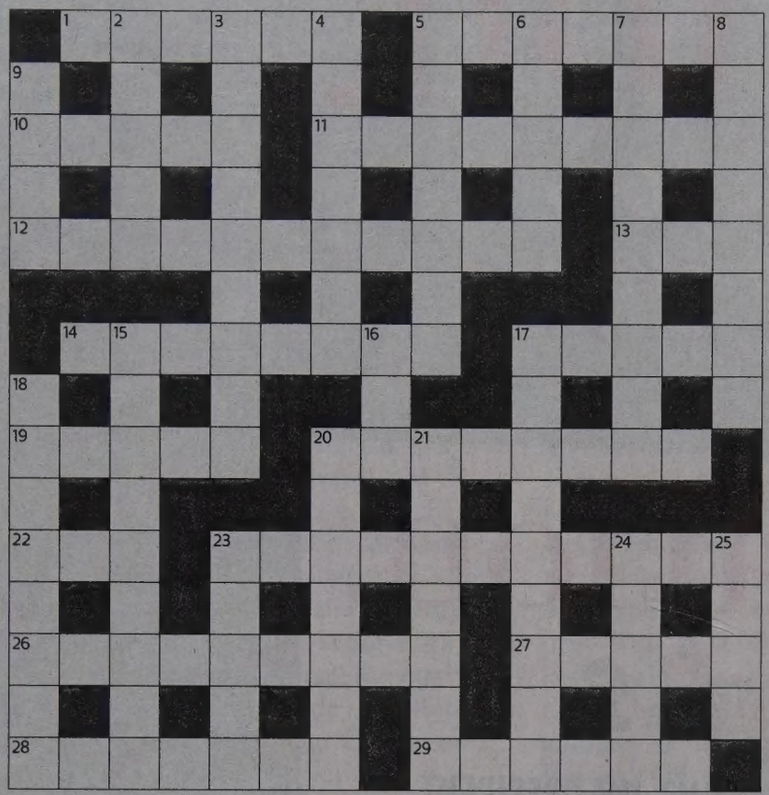
Puzzle No. 3447

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

1 Suffering doubt, I offer more money (6)

5 Enchanting and unusual claim involving silver (7)

10 Mathematician's relationship with a fink I love (5)

11 Subtract irrational number from eight hundred in error? That's something you DO NOT talk about (5,4)

12 Form a crowd around ringleader and false old man (11)

13, 16 down, and 22 Bug a Greek character to employ a tavern (9)

14 Lunatic butchers composer (8)

17 Flashy attractions surrounding hotel (5)

19 Backward look at cold, slow movement (5)

20 Leave a mess, made worse by spider's last cobweb (8)

22 See 13

23 Be a libertarian hero, invading home for a certain African animal (6,5)

26 Beginner's eco-friendly saxophone? (9)

27 Snake in company underwear (5)

28 Lydia must aspire to go westward, bearing fruit (7)

29 German guy trying to lose a few pounds? (6)

DOWN

2 *Soul Train* hosts an extremist (5)

3 A way Jack contributes to increase in athletic activity (5,4)

4 Reduce tire pressure, perhaps, with phat behind (7)

5 Rob's sexy photo (3,4)

6 Deadly weapon or deadly beast (5)

7 Observe and train White in a box (9)

8 Returning swimmer cut cost for essential part of an opera (8)

9 Hauled medicine (4)

15 Outside of Chernobyl, the place in the world that's highest and most brilliant (9)

16 See 13 across

17 Perceive dashboard indicator is on empty—that will cause you pain (9)

18 Beats half of Scotch eggs (8)

20 Drifting along without, say, an Afro-Italian conveyance (7)

21 Blemished, instead! (7)

23 Prohibition on you speaking in French or Zulu, for example (5)

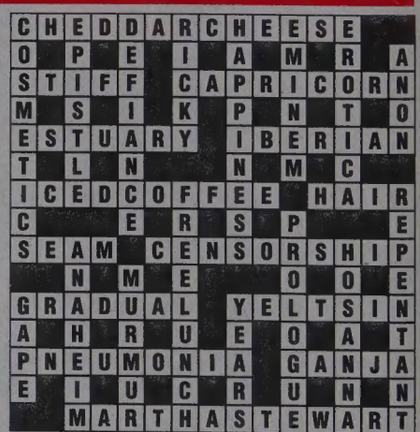
24 Clark was I, ere I saw the Spanish sack (5)

25 Wander in capital city by the Sound (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3446

ACROSS **1** letter bank **9** S + TIFF **10** CAPRI + CORN **11** anag. **12** [s]IBERIAN **13** ICE + D.C. + OFF + E.E. **15** H + AIR **18** S'EAM (rev.) **20** C([s]-ENSOR-S)HIP **23** GRA[y] + DUAL **24** anag. **25** P(NEUM + ON + I)A (*menu* anag.) **26** initial letters **27** MART + HASTE + WART

DOWN **1** anag. **2** rev. hidden **3** DE-FIANCE **4** R + ICKY **5** HAP(PIN) ESS (*shapes* anag.) **6** E + MINE + M **7** anag. **8** [c]ANON **14** FRE(EL + U) NCH **16** RE(PEN)TANT (*natter* anag.) **17** PR(O + LOG)UE (*pure* anag.) **19** ANA(HE)IM (*mania* anag.) **21** HO'S + ANNA **22** MUR + MUR (rev.) **23** G + APE **24** YE(AR)S



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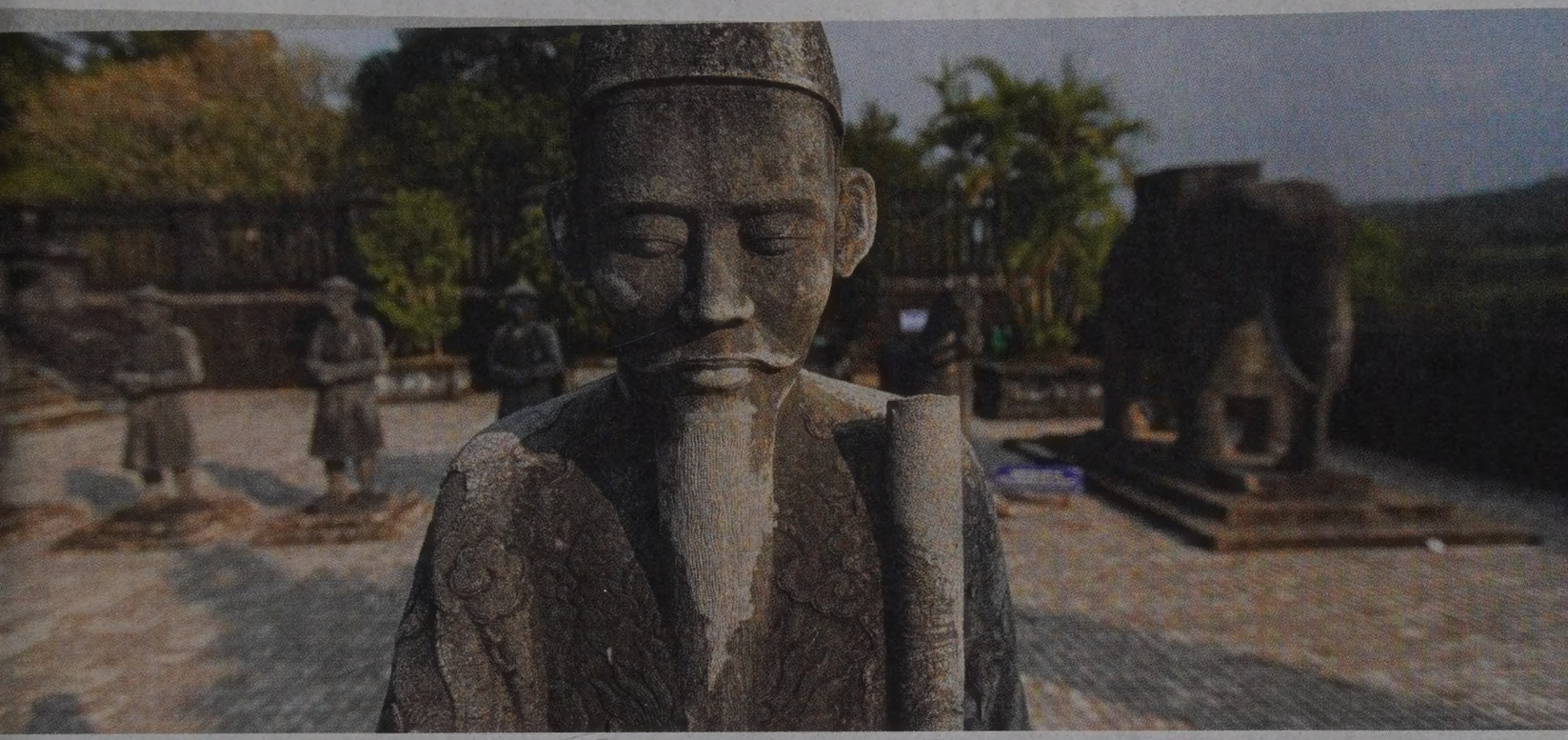

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